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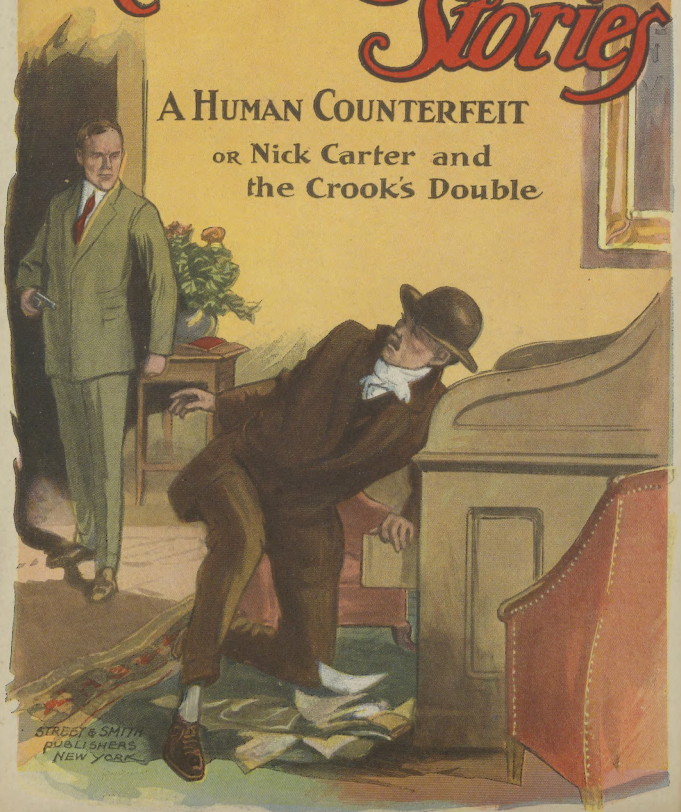
Nick Carter Stories

A HUMAN COUNTERFEIT

OR Nick Carter and the Crook's Double



NICK CARTER STORIES

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A HUMAN COUNTERFEIT;

Or, NICK CARTER AND THE CROOK'S DOUBLE.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

WHY WAS IT DONE?

"Extraordinary—that doesn't half express it. I know of no word that would. To some extent, Nick, at least, men's motives are usually discernible in their conduct. But in this case—why, there was nothing to it. It is utterly inexplicable. It was like a horrid dream, a hideous nightmare, or the mental abnormalities of a dope fiend."

Nick Carter laughed and spread his napkin, with a significant glance at his chief assistant, Chick Carter, who sat at one side of the table, that of a private dining room in a new and fashionable New York hotel.

"Well, Mr. Clayton, if the story you have to tell warrants so remarkable a preface, it will be interesting, at least," said the famous detective.

"Yes, Nick, and then some," Chick agreed, smiling. "He so has aroused my curiosity that I really am all ears."

"I don't think I shall disappoint you," said their companion, more gravely.

He was a fashionably clad man of thirty-five, of medium build and with clean-cut, attractive cast of features, smoothly shaved. There was in other respects nothing specially distinctive about him. He was the type of well-bred, well-informed, and thorough business man with which New York City abounds.

"Aside from the pleasure of having you dine with me, I am very glad of the privilege of telling you about my extraordinary experience," he added, gazing across the table at Nick. "I want your opinion about it. I was tempted to call on you for advice immediately after it occurred, but there were many reasons why I did not do so. I have been terribly busy, you know, since the opening of the new Westgate six months ago, when the directors gave me entire management of the house. Busy, Mr. Carter, is no name for it."

"I can imagine so," said Nick. "You certainly have a magnificent hotel here."

"There is none better in the city, nor one more generously patronized by wealthy and fashionable people," said Clayton, with a quiet display of pride. "We are getting the cream not only of local society, but also that of the traveling public. We are almost constantly crowded. It's an honor, indeed, to be the sole manager of such a house."

"I agree with you, Clayton, but you are the man for the position, I judge," said Nick. "I guess the board of directors made no mistake."

"It was partly due, perhaps, to my owning quite a block of the stock," Clayton replied, with a smile. "Now, to return to the main matter, I will tell you of my extraordinary experience."

"When did it occur, Clayton?" Nick inquired.

"Three months ago, Mr. Carter, during the first three days in September."

"Three days, eh? It covered a considerable period."

"A period of apprehension and anxiety beyond description."

"Began at the beginning, Clayton, and tell me the whole business."

"I can tell you only what occurred. It will be up to you to determine why it was done and what it signified."

"I will endeavor to do so."

"As is my custom once a week," Clayton began, "I had been out to Washington Heights to dine with my mother, who dislikes hotel life and for whom I bought an attractive place out there three years ago. Miss Langham was with me, the young lady to whom I am engaged. She is the only daughter of Gustavus Langham, president of the Century Trust Company."

"I am acquainted with him," Nick observed

"They have a suite here in the house," Clayton added. "My only other companion was my chauffeur, Paul Hazen,

who was driving my touring car. We started to return about ten o'clock. We had covered less than half a mile, and had arrived at a point in the road where there are no near dwellings, when we were held up by a touring car that stopped as we were approaching, and at such an angle across the road that we could not pass it."

"The occupants evidently had been waiting for you," Chick remarked.

"So I presently learned, though I did not think so at the time," Clayton replied. "One of the men in the car, the top of which was up and the side curtains on, had alighted and was looking at one of the front wheels. Two other men were getting out, and I inferred that they had met with a mishap. The moment we stopped, however, some twenty feet from them, all three approached my car, and one of them called me by name. I then supposed him a friend, whom I did not immediately recognize."

"Was it a dark evening?" Nick inquired.

"Not at all. It was bright starlight."

"What followed?"

"The spokesman of the party did not wait for an answer," Clayton continued. "He drew a revolver and ordered me to get out of my car, saying that I must go with him. At the same time another drew a gun and held up my chauffeur."

"What type of men were they?" Nick asked. "Did they appear to be ruffians?"

"Quite the contrary. They were well dressed and appeared like gentlemen, aside from their conduct. Each wore a full beard, however, and I at once suspected that they were in disguise."

"A very natural inference, Clayton, under the circumstances."

"They meant business, all right, for my protest was immediately checked with a more threatening command to get out of the car. I was told, nevertheless, that I would not be harmed, robbed, nor subjected to any serious inconvenience, providing I made no resistance. I was also told that their only purpose was to detain me from this hotel for a short time."

"I follow you," Nick nodded.

"Their spokesman, who did all of the talking, so informed Miss Langham and Hazen," Clayton proceeded. "He commanded them to return to the hotel, and to state that I had left town for a few days. He warned them against disclosing the truth and making a stir over my abduction. He threatened, in case they did, that my life would be the forfeit. On the other hand, he promised that I should be liberated and allowed to return safely, if his instructions were rigidly obeyed."

"Did you say anything to him except to protest against the outrage?"

"No. He wouldn't permit it, and the interview lasted only a few moments. I saw plainly that I had no alternative but to obey, however, and I resolved to take the rascal on his word. I directed Hazen and Clara to obey the scoundrel, therefore, and to take no steps for a few days, at least."

"I infer that they did so, since the outrage was not published."

"Exactly. That was the reason."

"You then went with the gang?"

"Yes. I had no alternative. Hazen was ordered to drive on with Miss Langham, and the gang waited until my car had disappeared. I then was commanded to get into the other, which I did, taking a seat between two of the knaves in the tonneau."

"Were there only three in the gang?"

"There was one other, the man who was driving the car."

"Did he also wear a beard?"

"Yes."

"All undoubtedly were in disguise," said Nick.

"Sure thing," Chick added. "Four bearded men in a bunch is very suggestive."

"Continue. What followed, Mr. Clayton?"

"I then was blindfolded, but not bound nor gagged, though I was threatened with death if I made any disturbance. I decided to take my medicine quietly, and I so informed the rascals."

"Otherwise you might have been roughly handled."

"I inferred so. Ten minutes later, after a rapid ride in directions I could not possibly determine, I arrived at a house and I was guided to a room on the second floor. I have not the slightest idea where the house is located, for I was completely lost by the several turns the car had taken."

"That was done in order to blind you."

"No doubt."

"What then occurred?"

"Then began the extraordinary part of the outrage," said Clayton, with an expressive shrug of his shoulders. "The bandage was removed from my eyes. I found myself in quite a large room, the four walls of which were entirely hung with thick black cloth. Not a window or door, not a picture, not so much as a square inch of the wall paper, were visible."

"By Jove, that was strange, indeed," Chick remarked.

"Even the chandelier, pendant from a perfectly plain, plastered ceiling, also was covered with the same somber cloth. It was like opening one's eyes in a chamber of horrors, or one draped in deepest mourning."

Nick Carter smiled.

"The design of your abductors is obvious, Clayton," said he.

"Do you think so?"

"I certainly do," Nick nodded. "All that was done to prevent your seeing anything by which you subsequently could positively identify the room."

"Well, well, that may be true, Nick, though I then was so affected by the mystery that that explanation did not occur to me," said Clayton. "Nor, in fact, have I since thought of it."

"What else did the room contain?" Nick inquired.

"Only two common wooden chairs and a narrow bed, the linen and blankets of which were perfectly plain."

"Was the floor bare?"

"Yes. The appearance of it, however, indicated that a carpet had recently been removed."

"Additional evidence that I am right," said Nick, smiling again. "The rascals took care that you should see absolutely nothing by which you could identify the place. Was the room lighted with electricity, or gas?"

"Gas. One jet of the chandelier was burning."

"What followed?"

"Only three of the scoundrels accompanied me to the room. I did not again see the fourth man until the evening of the third day of my captivity."

"Well, what occurred?" Nick inquired.

"The three men then wore black masks," Clayton continued. "I was ordered to remove all of my clothing except my undergarments. I did so under protest, of course, and all of my discarded garments were taken from the room by one of the rascals, who passed out between two overlapping draperies and through a concealed door. He presently returned with a woolen bath robe, which I was told to put on."

"And then?"

"A strong cord then was tied around my ankles, with about a foot of slack between them, which allowed me to hobble slowly, but effectually prevented me from flight, or attempting to do anything desperate. I then was invited to make myself at home, and told to be patient until I was liberated."

"By Jove, that was a strange experience," said Chick. "What do you make of it, Nick?"

"Wait till I have heard the entire story," Nick replied. "Were you left alone in the room, Mr. Clayton?"

"Not for a moment, Nick, during all the time I was there," said Clayton. "Two of the masked men withdrew. The third took one of the chairs and remained to guard and watch me. He was relieved by another about six o'clock the following morning, and the third relieved him about noon. This was repeated for three days and nights. Not once did I see either of them unmasked."

"Did they talk with you?"

"Part of the time, but only on ordinary topics. They would not discuss the outrage in any respect, nor permit me to question them. On the morning following my abduction, however, I was given a pen and paper and ordered to write to Clara Langham, stating that I was well and comfortable, and that she and Hazen must not deviate from the instructions given them. I was told to add that my absence would not exceed three days. I afterward learned that the letter was mailed one hour later in New York."

"It was dropped in town, Clayton, so that your whereabouts should not be indicated by the postmark," said Nick.

"I inferred so, of course."

"Were you well fed and properly treated, aside from your confinement?"

"Yes, I could not reasonably find fault. I was presented with the morning and evening newspapers, also with several magazines, and was permitted to read at will."

"I see."

"Not once, however, did I pass beyond those dismal black curtains, or get so much as a glimpse at anything outside of that somber room," Clayton added, with some feeling. "Not once was I without the gloomy companionship of a masked man in one of the chairs. I saw only three of them, as I have said, but I was under frequent scrutiny of another. I am sure, whose evil eyes were watching me through some part of the somber draperies."

"Did you hear him, that you feel so sure of it?" Nick questioned.

"No." Clayton quickly shook his head. "I did not hear him, Nick, or see him, not once, but I frequently felt that some one was stealthily watching me."

"And that continued for three days?"

"Yes. In the evening of the third day, Nick, my clothing was returned to me and I was told to dress. I then was blindfolded and guided from the house. Then followed another ride in the touring car, under the same conditions as before, and I was taken to a lonely road in an outskirt of Fordham."

"And then?"

"I then was directed to follow the road for a quarter mile, when I would reach a trolley line into town," Clayton said, in conclusion. "The four men then rode rapidly away, and one hour later I arrived at the Westgate, much to the relief of Miss Langham and my chauffeur, who were on the verge of reporting my abduction to the police. That's the whole story, Nick. Now, as Chick asked, what do you make of it?"

Nick laid aside his napkin. The dinner had been progressing during Clayton's recital, and coffee and cigars were in order.

"Well, I hardly know what to say," Nick replied. "Have you notified the police, or taken any steps to identify your abductors?"

"I have not," said Clayton. "They told me that any efforts along that line would be futile. I noticed the number on their touring car, but upon looking it up I found no such number. They had a doctored number plate."

"Obviously, Clayton, they took every precaution, not only to hide their identity, but also to prevent you from identifying the house in which you were confined, in event of subsequent suspicions," said Nick. "That they apprehended subsequent suspicion, moreover, shows plainly that they were paving the way for the execution of some later design."

"That does seem reasonable. I have not thought of that."

"Has anything since occurred that might have a bearing on the matter?"

"I know of nothing, Nick."

"Everything in the hotel is all right, so far as you know?"

"Yes, indeed. Things could not be better."

"I asked only because your abductors wanted to detain you from the hotel for a short time, or so one of them said."

"Very true. But there is nothing wrong here. I am sure of that."

"You have told me, then, all that you know about the affair, and you are without any suspicion concerning it?"

"Exactly. I have told you all, Nick, and am completely in the dark," Clayton earnestly declared.

Nick knocked the ashes from his cigar and prepared to rise from the table.

"I have only this to say," he replied, more impressively: "Be on your guard. Men never go to so much trouble, nor take such chances, Clayton, unless they have some definite and probably felonious design in view."

"That's true, Nick," Chick put in.

"There certainly is something in the wind," Nick added. "It is impossible to predict what it is, or when it will occur, but it is safe to say it relates to something with which you are identified. Otherwise, Clayton, you would never have met with such an experience. I can only warn you to be vigilant and constantly on your guard. A bomb may burst when it is least expected."

"That's right, too," Chick declared, as they arose from the table. "No man, Nick, could say more."

Mr. Chester Clayton thanked the detective for his advice and promised to be governed by it.

Precisely one week later, at eleven o'clock in the morning, Nick Carter's prediction was fulfilled.

A message from Clayton, addressed to Nick, and received in his library, called the detective to the Hotel Westgate.

It contained only half a dozen words:

"Come quickly. The bomb has burst."

CHAPTER II.

AN AMAZING ROBBERY.

Nick Carter responded immediately to Clayton's urgent message. It was half past eleven when he entered the magnificent new Westgate, and almost the first person he saw in the spacious and elaborately designed rotunda and main office was one of the house detectives, Nat Webber, with whom he was well acquainted.

Webber saw him entering and hurried to meet him.

"I am looking for Mr. Clayton," said Nick. "Where will I find him?"

"He is with Mademoiselle Falloni, in her suite on the fourth floor," said Webber, with his face reflecting no end of conflicting sentiments. "She's up in the air a mile. So is Madame Escobar, who has the adjoining suite. Clayton has it all over both of them, however, for he's in the air out of sight. It's my opinion, Carter, that he has suddenly gone daffy, as mad as a March hare, or any old jack rabbit. There can be nothing else to it."

"What do you mean?" Nick demanded. "What has occurred here?"

"I'll tell you what I know," said Webber. "If you can tell me what it means, Nick, you'll be going some. About half past ten—stop a bit. Come here and let me show you. Do you see that door?"

He drew Nick toward the office inclosure while speaking and pointed to a door leading out of it to the right.

"Yes, certainly," said Nick.

"That's the door to Clayton's private office," said Webber. "There is an opposite door which opens into a corridor leading to one of the stairways, the ladies' elevator, and the main dining room."

"Well?"

"At half past ten," Webber resumed; "Clayton was seen to leave the office inclosure and enter his private office. He closed the door, as he habitually does, denoting that he does not wish to be intruded upon. The clerks never interrupt him at such times except on very important business. Those are his instructions."

"Well?" Nick repeated.

"About five minutes later Clayton came from the corridor and spoke to the head clerk, Robert Vernon, over the counter, directing the clerk to hand Mademoiselle Falloni's jewel casket from the vault, remarking that she wanted them in her suite and that he would take the casket up to her."

"Is that so?" Nick muttered, brows knitting.

There was no need for Webber to tell him of the tremendous value of Mademoiselle Falloni's wonderful jewels. The world-famous prima donna, then singing *Cleópatra* with the International Grand Opera Company, had created a sensation and broken all records with her dazzling display of gems and jewels in her portrayal of Egypt's ill-starred queen.

The precautions to preclude robbery, moreover, would have seemed amply adequate to protect her. Three special detectives occupied her limousine during its run to and from the opera house. They guarded her dressing room between the acts. They watched her constantly when on the stage. From the moment her jewel casket was taken from the vault in the Westgate, in fact, until it was safely returned to it after each performance, these three trusty guardians never once lost sight of it.

Not less careful of her own costly jewels, which were deposited in the Westgate vault when not in use on the stage, was Madame Escobar, the celebrated Swedish contralto, to whom Detective Webber also had referred.

Half a million of money, in fact, was a conservative estimate of the value of both superb collections, though that of Mademoiselle Falloni greatly exceeded the other.

"Continue," said Nick, gazing steadily at Webber. "Tell me the whole business."

"That won't take long," returned the detective. "After five more minutes, Nick, Clayton again appeared at the office inclosure and asked for Madame Escobar's jewel case. He remarked to Vernon that the two singers wanted to compare some of their diamonds, and that both caskets would presently be returned. Vernon did not for a moment suspect anything wrong. Who on earth, as a matter of fact, would have suspected Clayton of anything crooked? Vernon brought the jewel case from the vault and Clayton departed with it."

"And then?"

"He came out of his private office a few minutes later, entering the clerks' inclosure."

"You mean through the door between the two offices?"

"Yes, certainly."

"But when he came after the jeweled caskets, or the first one, at least, he came from the other door, and through the corridor."

"Exactly."

"What followed?"

"Vernon asked, when Clayton entered the inclosure, if it would not be wise to have me keep an eye on Mademoiselle Falloni's suite," said Webber. "Clayton asked him for what reason. I was standing near enough to hear both. Vernon replied that something might happen to the two jewel caskets, since he, meaning Clayton, had left the women alone with them."

"What did Clayton say to that?" Nick inquired.

"Say to it?" Webber echoed. "He asked Vernon to explain, which he did, and Clayton then staggered all hearers, myself included, by declaring that he had not been out of his private office for nearly half an hour. Great guns, what a crust! Could you beat it? Could you beat it, Nick? The man has gone daffy, clean off his perch. He——"

"One moment, Webber," said Nick, interrupting. "Where were you when Clayton came after the jewel cases?"

"Right here in the office."

"Did you see him?"

"See him—certainly, Nick, I saw him."

"Are you sure it was he, absolutely sure?"

"Rats!" Webber blurted derisively. "Sure of it? That's a fat question. Do you think I've been hanging around here for six months and don't know Chester Clayton by sight? I know it was he, Nick. I would stake my life on it. Here's Vernon. Ask him."

Nick turned to the head clerk, who had been listening

over the marble counter, within a few feet of which the detectives were standing.

"What do you say, Mr. Vernon?" he inquired.

"I can speak as emphatically as Mr. Webber," was the reply. "I know positively that Mr. Clayton took both jewel cases from me."

"You would not admit, then, that you could be mistaken?"

"Impossible—utterly impossible!" Vernon forcibly declared. "Why, Mr. Carter, he stood as near to me as you are at this moment. He is not a man who could be successfully impersonated by another."

"Certainly not," put in Webber flatly.

"His smooth-shaved face could not be duplicated," added Vernon. "The man was Clayton, with Clayton's features, eyes, voice, and manner of speaking. Furthermore, an impersonator, if that is conceivable, could not have had on Clayton's clothing. I would have detected any change since morning. I noticed his suit, his navy-blue necktie, and his carbuncle scarfpin, when I gave him Mademoiselle Falloni's jewel casket over the counter. Mistake—that's utterly absurd, out of the question."

Nick did not argue the point.

"How large is the casket?" he inquired.

"About a foot long and eight inches square on the ends," said Vernon. "It is made of aluminum and it has two combination locks."

"And Madame Escobar's?"

"That is a leather-covered case, about half as large."

"Both of these thefts, then, if such they are, took place in about twenty minutes?" said Nick inquiringly.

"Just about that, Mr. Carter," Vernon nodded.

"What did Clayton say, or do, when informed of the circumstances?"

"He said very little, except to repeatedly assert that he had not been out of his private office," said Vernon. "He appeared nonplused, completely staggered for a few moments, and then he suddenly ran through his private office and out into the adjoining corridor, where he began searching in all directions for a man who had been with him all the while in his private office—or so he said," Vernon added significantly.

"Well, well, if that man can be found, he will corroborate Clayton and settle the——"

"But he cannot be found, Nick," Webber put in forcibly. "Clayton cannot even recall his name. No man inquired for him at the desk. No man was seen going to the door of his private office. No man was seen to leave it. The elevator boy in that corridor is equally positive, on the contrary, that he saw Clayton twice on the stairs. Others saw him also, and it's absurd to suppose all are mistaken."

"You speak as if thoroughly convinced, Webber, that Mr. Clayton has stolen both jewel cases; that he has suddenly turned from an upright and honorable man and become a criminal," Nick said, more forcibly.

"No, no, I don't mean exactly that," Webber quickly protested. "But the circumstances, Nick, certainly speak for themselves. What I really think is that Clayton has lost his mind; that his brain is turned by overwork, anxiety, and the thought of having property of such extraordinary value in the hotel vault. I think he removed the jewel cases in a state of mental aberration, from which he has not yet recovered. I don't think he now realizes that he did so, or knows what he has done with them."

"Well, that is a more considerate view of the matter, at least," Nick replied incredulously. "Did you overhear any conversation in the private office, Mr. Vernon, during the time Clayton claims to have been there?"

"I did not, Mr. Carter."

"Could you ordinarily have heard it? Are voices audible to persons in the outer office when the door of the private office is closed?"

"Not unless they are raised considerably above an ordinary tone," said Vernon. "One must speak quite loud to be heard outside."

"Where is Clayton now?" Nick inquired.

"With Mademoiselle Falloni," said the clerk. "He rushed up to her suite after his vain search for the visitor he claims to have had, and almost immediately he sent down the message I telephoned to you. He has not since been down here."

"Call up my house again, Mr. Vernon," Nick abruptly directed. "Tell whoever answers you that I want Chick and Patsy Garvan to come here immediately. Tell them to wait here for me, if they arrive before I return. Get a hall boy. I will go up to Mademoiselle Falloni's suite at once."

"Front!" shouted the clerk.

"The bomb has burst, indeed," thought Nick, as he hastened toward the elevator.

CHAPTER III.

THE WOMAN WHO FAINTED.

The incidents depicted had transpired quickly. Only about half an hour had passed since the extraordinary crime was discovered, assuming it to have been a crime, rather than the irresponsible act of a man mentally unbalanced, as Detective Webber suspected.

Nick Carter did not have any faith in that theory, however, though he deferred forming any definite theory of his own until he had looked a little deeper into the circumstances. The startling news had spread through the house by that time, as appeared in the numerous guests who had gathered in the corridors, engaged in earnest discussions of the case, and observed by the detective while the elevator sped up to the fourth floor.

Nick was promptly admitted to the magnificent suite occupied by Mademoiselle Falloni and her two maids, and the scene in her apartments was about what he was expecting.

He found Mademoiselle Falloni completely prostrated by her loss. She was lying faint and pale on a luxurious couch in the parlor, in the care of her maids and a physician living in the house.

Madame Escobar, who had been called into the suite, was nearly as deeply distressed, but she had greater command of her feelings. She was in tears in an armchair.

Mr. Clayton, whom Nick had not seen since their dinner of a week before, now appeared to have gained his composure, and evidently was remaining there to do what he could to calm and encourage the two celebrated vocalists, both of whom had been guests of the hotel during the previous month of the opera season.

The only other person present was a stately, graceful girl in the twenties, as beautiful as the ideal of an old

master. She was very pale, however, with such manifest anxiety for Clayton that Nick immediately identified her as Clara Langham, the young lady to whom he was engaged.

"Ah, here is Mr. Carter, now," cried Clayton, hastening to greet the detective. "We have been waiting for you, Nick. I have been trying to calm the ladies, and have succeeded only by predicting the speedy recovery of their jewels through your prompt work in this terrible case. Let me introduce you and tell you about it, that no time may be lost."

"I already am informed of most of the known circumstances," Nick replied, shaking hands with him. "Detective Webber and Mr. Vernon have told me. Time, as you say, may be of value."

Clayton hastened to introduce the three ladies. The two victims of the crime brightened up perceptibly upon seeing the famous detective, though still with irrepressible sobs Mademoiselle Falloni begged him to restore her lost treasures, which Nick assured her that he would leave no stone unturned to do.

Miss Langham greeted him more calmly, saying, with girlish earnestness, nevertheless:

"I heard of the dreadful circumstances and that Chester was here, so I came to comfort him. Oh, please, Mr. Carter, don't think for a moment that he is guilty of anything wrong. He is incapable of it. This is the outcome, I am sure of that terrible experience of three months ago, of which he has told you."

"I think so, too, Miss Langham," Nick replied.

"I am so glad to hear you say so. I felt sure of it the moment I heard of the terrible crime."

"I will do all that is possible, Miss Langham, I assure you."

Clayton then introduced the physician.

"Doctor David Guelpa," said he. "Shake hands with Mr. Carter, doctor. He is the Hungarian specialist, Nick, who has quarters in Fifth Avenue. Luckily he was in his suite on this floor, however, when Mademoiselle Falloni was informed of the robbery. For she fainted dead away, and since has been in hysterics. I sent for Doctor Guelpa, and he came immediately."

"I am pleased to know you, Mr. Carter, very pleased," said the physician, while they shook hands. "I long have known you by name. Very pleased, sir, I am sure."

Nick bowed and responded in conventional terms, at the same time viewing the Hungarian specialist a bit curiously.

Doctor Guelpa was a man of medium build and apparently about forty years old. He looked like a foreigner. His complexion was medium, also, and his head was crowned with a bushy growth of reddish-brown hair, while his lower features were covered with a mustache and a profuse crinkly beard of the same obtrusive hue.

He wore spectacles with tortoise-shell rims and bows, the lenses of which were unusually thick, and he blinked frequently in a way denoting near-sightedness and a slight nervous affection. He spoke with a slight foreign accent, moreover, but was a man of pleasing address and evident gentility.

Nick turned almost immediately to Clayton, however, saying while he took a chair:

"That we may lose no time, as you say, we will get right at this matter. I have sent for two of my assistants. While waiting for them, Clayton, I wish to hear your side of the story."

"There is no side of it, Nick," Clayton earnestly answered. "I am outside of the whole business, barring the assertions of others that I figure in the case. I deny that emphatically. I know nothing about the crime, for such it is, of course."

"You were in your private office when it was committed?" questioned Nick, intently regarding him.

"Yes, certainly, as I have stated."

"In company with——"

"I don't know with whom," Clayton interrupted. "I entered my office about half past ten, intending to write several personal letters. I had been there only a few moments when the door was opened, that leading into the hall corridor, and an elderly, well-dressed man stepped in and asked me to spare him a few minutes upon important business."

"A stranger?"

"Yes. He mentioned his name, but I did not note it carefully and I cannot now recall it."

"What did he want?"

"I asked him of what his business consisted, and he said that he wanted to confer with me about special hotel rates and accommodations for a wealthy Persian prince, for whom he stated he was acting as an agent, and who is coming to America incognito with his wife and a retinue of servants."

"You then consented to talk with him?"

"Yes. I suspected nothing, of course, and the proposition appealed to me," Clayton explained. "I invited him to be seated, and we entered into a discussion on the matter. He appeared well informed and questioned me along various lines bearing upon the subject, at the same time making numerous entries in a notebook of the terms and other details that I mentioned."

"I see."

"I anticipated that I might obtain a desirable and profitable patron," Clayton added. "Our interview lasted about twenty minutes, I should say, and he then thanked me and departed, stating that he would see me again."

"And then?"

"I then returned to my desk and began my letters. Unable to recall the precise address of the man I was about to write, however, I stepped into the general office to get it from the bookkeeper. I then learned from Vernon what had occurred, Nick, and that was the first I knew of it, and all that I know of it."

"You attempted, I understand, to find the stranger with whom you had been talking."

"Yes, naturally," nodded Clayton. "When told so positively that I had taken the jewel cases, it quickly occurred to me that I might find it necessary to establish an alibi. The stranger is the only person who can corroborate my assertions. I rushed out of the office to find him, therefore, but he had disappeared."

"That is unfortunate," said Nick. "Not that I personally doubt your statements, Clayton, but because his corroboration of them would dispel misgivings from the minds of others, some quite closely associated with you."

"I realize that, Nick, most keenly," Clayton said gravely. "It seems utterly incredible to me, nevertheless, that Mr. Clayton has misrepresented anything, or is capable of such a crime," Doctor Guelpa remarked, quite forcibly. "I really will never believe it."

"Thank you, doctor," Clayton said quickly, bowing.

"Describe the man with whom you talked, Clayton," Nick directed.

"He is an ordinary type of man, Nick, apparently about sixty years old. He has dark hair and a full beard, sprinkled with gray. He is quite tall and of rather slender build. He talked and appeared like a gentleman."

"He wore a full beard, did he?"

"Yes."

"It's ten to one, then, that he was disguised."

Doctor Guelpa laughed audibly.

"I hope you don't imply, Mr. Carter, that one in every ten men that wear a full beard is in disguise," said he jestingly. "I have, as you see, quite a profuse growth of whiskers."

"Not at all, doctor," Nick replied, smiling. "Under the circumstances involved, however, I always distrust bearded men."

"Yes, yes, to be sure," nodded the physician. "I appreciate the point, of course."

"Can you recall in the stranger, Clayton, as you now remember him, any characteristic in voice, figure, or manner of speech, resembling that of either of the masked men whom you encountered three months ago?" Nick inquired.

"I cannot say that I do, Nick."

"Well, one fact is obvious," said the detective. "If you are not mentally wrong, Clayton, and I see no indications of it, and if your statements are true, of which I personally have not the slightest doubt, this crime was committed by a man closely resembling——"

Nick was interrupted by a quick, insistent knock on the hall door.

Mademoiselle Falloni's maid, who then was standing near by, hastened to open it.

Madame Escobar uttered a cry, with countenance lighting, and started up from her chair.

"Courage!" she cried, addressing Mademoiselle Falloni. "Some one brings news—good news, perhaps! Courage, Helena!"

Instead, however, a stately woman in black swept into the room, a remarkably handsome woman in the fifties, but whose hair was prematurely gray, and the gravity of whose refined, almost classical face denoted that her life had not been one of all sunshine. She was fashionably clad and in street attire.

Clayton sprang up to meet her, crying impulsively:

"My mother! I did not dream it was you."

The woman stopped short, gazing at him with wide eyes and an expression of dread on her white face.

"What is this I hear, Chester?" she cried, as if oblivious to the presence of others. "Tell me quickly. Tell me quickly, my son! You suspected of crime, of——"

"No, no; nothing of the kind," Clayton hurriedly cried, both hands uplifted. "A crime has been committed, but I know nothing about it. The criminal was a man so like me that——"

Clayton caught his breath and stopped short.

The woman had reeled as if struck a blow, and every vestige of color had left her face.

"Like you!" she echoed, gasping. "So like you that—that——"

Doctor Guelpa started toward her.

"Careful, madame!" he cried, with hands outstretched. "Be calm, or you will——"

His warning came too late.

The woman's eyes suddenly rolled upward. Her arms dropped lax at each side. Before any observer could reach her, she fell unconscious upon the floor, as ghastly as if the hand of death had suddenly claimed her.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW NICK SIZED IT UP.

Nick Carter entered his Madison Avenue residence at four o'clock that afternoon and hurried into his library, in which Chick Carter and Patsy Garvan were awaiting him.

Their investigations in the Hotel Westgate had ended abruptly temporarily some time before. They had been productive of no more than has appeared. No additional clews were discovered. No trace of the stolen jewel cases had been found, nor any evidence or testimony obtained pointing to the identity of the thief, aside from that involving Chester Clayton, the one most important man in the house, and the only one, in fact, or a perfect counterfeit of him, could so have obtained the jewel cases from the hotel vault.

Numerous persons had been found who had seen him in the hotel office and corridor, nevertheless, or positively testified thereto; but none who had seen the stranger he described, and on whom alone he could depend to corroborate his statements and establish his innocence.

As a result of all this, both Mademoiselle Falloni and Madame Escobar had insisted that Clayton must be arrested, which was reluctantly done by Detective Webber, despite the objections of Nick Carter and his refusal to comply with the insistent demands of the famous vocalists.

The mission from which Nick was returning at four o'clock, however, appeared in his first remark.

"Well, I got him out," he said, while removing his coat and hat.

"On bail?" Chick tersely questioned.

"Yes. I had to put up some argument, however, and his bondsmen a cool thirty thousand dollars," said Nick, laughing a bit grimly. "I promised Judge Sadler that I would find the real crooks and recover the jewels, or, rather, I predicted it, and it now is up to us to make good."

"Make good, chief, is right," declared Patsy. "I'm on nettles to get at it, for fair, if I only knew where and how to begin."

"The way will open," Nick replied confidently.

"What's your big idea, chief?"

"This job was done by some one living in the hotel."

"Do you really think so?"

"I'm sure of it. No outsider could have accomplished it. It was done too quickly. The entire trick was turned in twenty minutes."

"That's right, too," nodded Patsy.

"Nor could an outsider have got away with both jewel cases, taken separately, without being seen by some one in the house. The crook is a guest in the hotel, so are probably his confederates."

"Do you think the stranger who talked with Clayton had a hand in the job?" Chick asked.

"Undoubtedly. His part was to detain Clayton in his private office until the rascal who impersonated Clayton could turn the trick."

"But, by Jove, it seems incredible that Clayton could have been impersonated," Chick said doubtfully. "It's not

easy to counterfeit a smooth-shaved man of his type. Especially under such circumstances. He got by at least a dozen persons who are well acquainted with Clayton. Besides, Vernon noticed his garments, his necktie, and his carbuncle pin. By Jove, it seems incredible."

Nick emphasized his reply by thumping his desk with his knuckles.

"Clayton either is guilty, or he is not," said he. "I feel sure he is not. If I am right, and I'm going to bank the limit on it, he was impersonated by some one. You must admit that."

"Certainly," Chick allowed. "That goes without saying."

"It is confirmed, moreover, by what occurred three months ago."

"Clayton's abduction?"

"Yes."

"How do you now size it up?"

"It's as plain as twice two," said Nick. "That job was pulled off only to pave the way for this one. Clayton was abducted to be studied, that his voice, manner, facial expressions, every outside detail of him, in fact, might be perfectly imitated. You remember, Chick, that he sensed the frequent and stealthy espionage of some person whom he did not see."

"Yes, indeed, I remember."

"That unknown spy, take it from me, was the crook who to-day impersonated Clayton," Nick added.

"Well, possibly."

"Bear in mind, too, that Clayton was deprived of his outside clothing during the entire three days of his mysterious captivity. His pin was duplicated in the meantime, and a suit of clothing precisely matching his was obtained. I learned, when I questioned him privately after his mother was revived and the circumstances explained to her, that he to-day had on the very suit he wore at the time of his abduction."

"By Jove, that is quite significant," Chick admitted.

"Gee whiz! it's more than that, Chick," cried Patsy. "It's almost convincing."

"That's precisely what it is, Patsy," said Nick. "Since then, no doubt, the rascals have obtained other suits like those worn by Clayton, rather than depend upon his wearing that particular one at the time when it was necessary to commit the robbery. He probably wore it to-day by chance. The coincidence, nevertheless, is no less significant on that account."

"Not an atom less, chief, surely."

"Do you think, then, that they had this jewel robbery in view when they abducted Clayton?" Chick asked.

"I certainly do," Nick replied. "Mademoiselle Falloni's jewels have a world-wide reputation. They have been the sensation of Europe. She invariably wears them when singing *Cleopatra*. Her engagement in New York at this time was announced months ago, also the fact that a suite in the Westgate had been retained for her. All of these details were literally handed to the crooks by the newspapers, enabling them to definitely plan this robbery."

"Well, all that does seem quite reasonable," Chick nodded.

"Let's go a step farther, then," Nick continued. "Having thus paved the way for the crime, what was the most natural step for the crooks to have taken, or at least the one who was to impersonate Clayton?"

"You say."

"Obviously, Chick, it would have been to take quarters in the hotel, seeking apartments convenient for the job and pretending to be a reputable person. Not only could Clayton's daily habits in the house then be observed, but suspicion after the crime would also be averted."

"Why so?"

"Because old residents in a hotel are seldom suspected under such circumstances. Recent guests are the ones who incur distrust."

"That also is true, Nick."

"Furthermore, no doubt, the crooks have reasoned that no connection would be suspected between this crime and the abduction episodes of more than three months ago."

"Nor would it have been, Nick, if Clayton had not mentioned the strange circumstances to us."

"Possibly not. Nothing definite, at all events, would have been deduced from them," said Nick.

"Gee! it strikes me, chief, that we ought to derive some advantage from all this," said Patsy.

"I think that we can."

"What's your scheme?"

"I want you, Patsy, to return to the Westgate in disguise," said Nick. "Get next to Vernon, the head clerk, and confide your identity to him."

"And then?"

"Then learn from him what persons now in the house have been permanent guests for the past three months, or since a week or two earlier, having arrived there about the time of Clayton's abduction."

"I see the point, chief," Patsy quickly nodded.

"There probably are not many who have been there precisely that length of time, and the books will readily supply the information. Get a list of them from Vernon, and then proceed to look them up on the quiet. Sift out who cannot be reasonably suspected. Well-known persons, those of recognized integrity, any whose apartments are badly suited for such a job—there are many ways by which you can eliminate those not reasonably to be distrusted."

"I've got you, chief, dead to rights."

"We may discover by this eliminating process some who seriously warrant suspicion," Nick added. "You then may go a step farther, Patsy, and see what you can learn about them."

"Trust me for that, chief. I'll get all that's coming to me," declared Patsy confidently.

"You may report in person, or by telephone."

"That will depend on what's doing. May I act on my own judgment?"

"If sure you are right."

"That's good enough for me, chief. Shall I leave at once?"

"Presently."

"By Jove, there's one point, Nick, that I cannot get over," insisted Chick, who had been deep in thought for several moments. "It won't run, grapple it how I will."

"What point is that, Chick?" Nick inquired.

"The extraordinary likeness of the thief and Clayton. I know of no man, not excluding yourself, who is so clever in the art of making up as to counterfeit a smooth-shaved, clean-cut face like that of Chester Clayton. That one point, which is inconsistent with the theory you have formed, is still in my crop. I can't swallow it."

"I admit the difficulty," said Nick, smiling a bit oddly.

"I think there is one person, however, who could enlighten us a little on that point, if so inclined."

"Whom do you mean?"

"Clayton's mother—Mrs. Julia Clayton."

"Why do you think so?"

"For two reasons," said Nick. "First, because of something she said when she entered Mademoiselle Falloni's suite immediately after learning about the robbery. I already have told you the circumstances."

"But not what she said, Nick."

"In reply to an assertion by Clayton that the robbery had been committed by some man so like him as to escape detection, she cried with a gasp, catching up only two words—'like you! So like you that—that'—and there she collapsed, Chick, unable to finish the response she had in mind, and down she crashed upon the floor in a dead faint."

"And you deduce from that?" Chick questioned.

"Merely that Mrs. Julia Clayton knows of some man who bears a very close likeness to her son."

"By Jove, there may be something in that."

"It listens good to me, all right," put in Patsy.

"But what did she say, Nick, when she revived?"

"That is where my second reason comes in," said Nick. "She did not volunteer to say anything about it, nor to explain her sudden collapse. She listened to Clayton's statement of the circumstances, and appeared to feel relieved, but not a word of explanation came from her."

"That was a bit strange, indeed."

"I think Doctor Guelpa noticed it, also, for I detected a look of surprise in his eyes."

"Why didn't you question Mrs. Clayton?"

"The time was not favorable," said Nick. "She was not in a mood to have answered personal questions. I saw that plainly enough, Chick, and I decided to defer interrogating her. I preferred, moreover to see her alone."

"You intend doing so, then?"

"Surely."

"When?"

"This evening. I shall call at her home on Washington Heights. I think I may find her alone."

"In that case——"

"In that case, Chick, she will tell me what she had on her mind this morning, or I'll know the reason why," Nick interrupted, with ominous emphasis, while he arose from his swivel chair. "Go ahead, Patsy, along the lines I have directed. We'll start this ball rolling."

CHAPTER V.

PATSY STRIKES A SNAG.

Patsy Garvan never did things by halves. Soon after six o'clock that evening a dapper young man of remarkably inoffensive aspect, barring a somewhat fierce upward twist of his mustache, which was also remarkable in that it could be quickly transferred to his vest pocket—soon after six o'clock this dapper young man entered the Hotel Westgate and sauntered to the office inclosure.

Though it was a busy hour of the day and the subordinate clerks actively engaged, Patsy quickly found an opportunity to speak to Vernon, to whom he said quietly:

"Keep that same expression on your face, old top. A look of surprise might be seen by some gink whom we least suspect. I'm Garvan, Nick Carter's assistant. Invite me into that cubbyhole back of the bookkeeper's desk. I want a bit of information from you."

Vernon instantly grasped the situation. He nodded, while smiling and shaking hands with Patsy over the counter.

"Step around to the end of the inclosure and I'll let you in," he replied.

Patsy did so and was admitted, taking a chair back of the bookkeeper's high desk, which concealed him from view of persons outside of the inclosure.

"By Jove, Garvan, I never would have recognized you," Vernon then laughed quietly. "What can I do for you?"

Patsy told him without stating why he wanted the information, but cautioned him to say nothing about the matter.

"I can tell you in a very few minutes," Vernon then said, more gravely. "The ledger accounts will show just who has been here during the period you mention, also just when they arrived. I will get it. We will look it over together."

"Go ahead," nodded Patsy.

It required, as Vernon had said, only a few minutes to learn who had been permanent guests in the hotel since the middle of August. The list was not a long one. It contained only four names, in fact, though thousands of transients had been coming and going during the same interval.

"Permanent guests did not begin to flock in, you see, until the end of the summer season," Vernon explained.

"So much the better," said Patsy. "This simplifies the matter. Two of these guests are women. What do you know about them?"

"Both are wealthy widows," said Vernon. "One is seventy years old, and she has only a maid companion. The other has two daughters, who occupy the same suite with her. Her rooms are on the ninth floor."

"Any man living with either of them?"

"No."

"I can safely drop them then, all right," thought Patsy. "What about this man Hanaford, of London?"

"He is an American representative of several big English woolen mills," said Vernon. "I have known him for a long time. He is about sixty years old and is a man of unquestionable integrity."

"What about the last, then?" questioned Patsy, assured as to the English agent. "By Jove, he's the man the chief saw in Mademoiselle Falloni's suite this morning—Doctor David Guelpa."

"Yes, the same," nodded Vernon. "I am not so sure about him."

"What do you know about him?"

"Very little. In fact, Garvan, nothing positively reliable. He came here on the fifth of September, as you see, with a valet named John Draper."

"Two days after Clayton's abduction and liberation," thought Patsy, with growing suspicion.

"He stated that he was a Hungarian physician, a throat specialist, and that he might remain indefinitely in New York," Vernon continued. "He took an expensive suite, which he since has occupied with his valet, and a few days later he opened offices in Fifth Avenue, which he still retains. I don't know how much business he does, Garvan, but seems to have plenty of money."

"Is a social man?"

"Not at all. He is very reserved."

"What are his office hours? Is he usually here at eleven o'clock in the morning?" asked Patsy, quick to suspect his presence in the hotel on that particular morning.

"No, not ordinarily," said Vernon. "He may have been detained this morning."

"It's very obvious that he was here, all right," Patsy said dryly. "Does he have any mail?"

"No, none. I suppose it goes to his office."

"Does he receive any visitors?"

"Very few. There are two men who occasionally come here to see him."

"Do you know them?"

"No."

"Where is his office?"

"Less than ten minutes' walk from here," said Vernon. "I will look up the number for you."

"Never mind it, Vernon, at present," said Patsy, detaining him. "On what floor is Doctor Guelpa's suite?"

"The fourth."

"Is it near the stairway, or elevator?"

"It adjoins the side stairway."

"The one leading down to the corridor adjoining Clayton's private office?"

"Yes."

"H'm, is that so?" Patsy muttered. "This looks very much as if I had hit a promising trail."

"You mean——"

"Never mind what I mean, Vernon, and be sure you don't lisp a word of this, nor look at Doctor Guelpa as if you had any distrust," cautioned Patsy. "Is his suite on the same floor as that of Mademoiselle Falloni?"

"Yes, and in the same corridor."

"What's the number?"

Vernon glanced at a schedule on the bookkeeper's desk and quickly informed him, Patsy mentally retaining the number.

"Have you seen Doctor Guelpa this evening?" he then inquired.

"Yes. He went in to dinner just before you entered. It's not time for him to come out."

"Did Draper, the valet, come down with him?"

"I'm not sure. I saw Draper in the office just before Doctor Guelpa showed up, however, and he may be at dinner."

"I'll mighty soon find out," thought Patsy; then, aloud: "That's all, Vernon, and I'm vastly obliged. Mum's the word, mind you."

"Trust me, Garvan," nodded the clerk.

Patsy thanked him again and departed. He had decided what course he would shape. He knew that he could easily learn whether Doctor Guelpa, or his valet, then was in the physician's suite.

"If both are absent, by Jove, I'll have a look at his rooms," he said to himself. "They may contain something worth seeing. It may be more than a coincidence, by gracious, that he was a Charley on the spot this morning and contrived to be in mademoiselle's suite so soon after the robbery.

"He may, if my suspicions have feet to stand on, have been out to learn what had been discovered, or was suspected, and what detectives were to be employed.

"This looks too good to me to be dropped without looking deeper, and I'll snatch this opportunity for a peep at that sawbones' rooms before I phone the chief. A throat specialist, eh? I'll have him by the throat sooner or later, if I find I'm on the right track."

Patsy was seeking the fourth floor while indulging in this hopeful train of thought. He ignored the elevator and quickly mounted the several stairways, and brought up at the door of Doctor Guelpa's suite.

It then was half past six, and many of the guests had gone down to dinner. The long, luxuriously carpeted corridor was quiet and deserted, lighted only with an incandescent lamp here and there.

Patsy listened at the door for a moment. He could hear no sound from within, nor detect any evidence of a light.

"It's a hundred to one the sawbones is out," he muttered. "I can woolly eye that valet, all right, if he is here. I'll pretend I've got a bad throat, trouble in my pipes, and that I want to consult his jags from Hungary. He'll be a wise gazabo, all right, if I can't fool him."

Patsy was folding his handkerchief in the form of a bandage, which he then fastened around his neck, turning up his coat collar, much as if the advice and aid of a physician was really necessary. Putting on a look of abject misery that would have deceived a clairvoyant, he then knocked sharply on Doctor Guelpa's door.

It brought no response from within.

Patsy listened intently, then knocked again, with the same negative result.

"Gee! that's good enough for me," he muttered. "It's a cinch that both are out, and it's me for the inside. I'll make this door look like thirty cents."

Patsy had it unlocked and opened in less than thirty seconds, at all events, and he then stepped into the entrance hall. A thick portière across an inner door was closely drawn. The room beyond was in darkness. Silence reigned in the gloomy suite.

Closing the hall door, Patsy groped his way to the other and found an electric switch key on the wall near the casing. He turned it and a flood of light revealed a handsomely furnished parlor, also the partly open doors of two adjoining bedrooms.

He could see through one of them a broad bed, with other sleeping-room furnishings, also two large trunks near one of the walls.

A roll-top desk in the parlor caught his eye. The cover was raised, and he turned in that direction.

"I'll see what that contains, for a starter," thought Patsy. "'Twas very good of him to leave it open. I'll go through it like a shot through a gun. The drawers first and then——"

Then, on the contrary, the hurried search he had begun abruptly ended.

The silence was broken by a threatening command from behind him, a voice so curt and cold that no sane man would have ignored it.

"Cut that! Sit down in the chair, or you'll drop on the floor in a condition you'll not fancy."

Patsy, kneeling at the desk, one of the drawers of which he had pulled open, swung round like a flash.

A tall, smoothly shaved, black-eyed man had stepped noiselessly from one of the bedrooms. There was murder in his eyes, also in his right hand.

It held a revolver, aimed point-blank at the crouching detective.

CHAPTER VI.

UNDER TRUE COLORS.

Patsy Garvan realized on the instant that he had been trapped; that he was in wrong, as well as right; that the man who now held him up must have suspected something threatening, and instead of responding to the knock on the outer door, had quickly extinguished the light in the parlor and then stepped into the bedroom to await developments.

That, at least, was the way Patsy immediately sized it up.

As quickly, too, recalling the bandage around his neck and his upturned collar, he resorted to a subterfuge which he thought might serve his purpose and prevent an exposure of his true identity and designs.

Sharply eying the threatening intruder, therefore, whom he rightly inferred was the absent physician's valet, or more properly his confederate, Patsy coolly answered:

"Don't get miffed, old chap, and go slow with that gun. It might go off by chance, you know, and I don't like the way it's pointing. You've got me all right, and I'm not fool enough to butt my head against a brick wall."

Draper viewed him with a scornful curl of his thin lips.

"Sit in that chair," he repeated, revolver leveled. "Keep your hands on its arms, too, or this gun will go off in the direction it's pointed—but not by chance."

"You wouldn't kill a fellow in cold blood, would you?" asked Patsy, obeying.

"Yes, or hot blood. It would matter little to me."

"That would be foolish. You might be executed for murder."

"Not by a long chalk. A man may protect his property with a gun, or that of his employer."

"So I've heard," Patsy dryly allowed.

"What do you want here?"

"Anything I could get worth lifting."

"You mean that you came here to steal something?"

"Don't I look it? How else would you size it up?"

"I asked for information."

"Well, I'm handing you straight goods," said Patsy. "I'm in hard sledding and in need of a lift, so I tried to get it without a formal request. I'm not good at begging. Lemme go this time, will you? I'll never butt in here again."

"I'll make sure of that," retorted Draper, with ominous significance.

Then he took a chair some six feet in front of Patsy, coolly sitting down with the revolver still poised in his hand and ready for instant use, if necessary.

Patsy realized that he was up against a man of nerve, as well as a man who would not shrink from bloodshed under the circumstances. That he was confronted by one of the gang that had abducted Clayton, moreover, and one of the gang that had stolen the jewel cases that morning, he now had not a doubt.

There was a brief period of silence, finally broken by Patsy.

"Well, what are you waiting for?" he asked. "Get busy. Do something."

"I'm doing it.'

"Doing what?"

"Watching you."

"You'll not let me go, then?"

"Not so you'll notice it.

"But we can't remain sitting here like two catsup bottles on a shelf," growled Patsy, with affected resentment. "Let's come to some kind of an understanding. What are you going to do about it?"

"I haven't decided," said Draper, constantly alert. "You're a thief, are you?"

"That's what," Patsy insisted. "I admit it, but it's only because I'm out of a job. I'm a high-grade thief, too, as you can see by my looks."

"Yes, you look it, all right."

"I've got a room here in the house, and I pass for a decent fellow. Call up the hotel clerk, Vernon, if you doubt it, and he'll tell you."

"There isn't any need of calling him," Draper sneered. "I'm waiting for some one else."

"Who is that?" asked Patsy, pretending ignorance.

"You'll soon see."

"When? How soon?"

"When he returns from dinner. He'll say what must be done with you. He's the big finger in this—ah, there he is. Don't stir, or you'll be a dead one."

Draper's gaze was fixed more sharply upon his helpless hearer, and his revolver again was leveled.

Patsy took him on his word and did not stir.

A key had been thrust into the hall door. The door swung open while Draper was speaking, and Doctor Guelpa strode through the narrow entrance hall.

He started slightly upon seeing the two motionless men, but if he felt any great surprise, or any consternation, he did not betray it.

"Who is this fellow, Draper?" he inquired, pausing.

"He says he's a thief," replied Draper, without turning an eye from Patsy.

"You caught him stealing?"

"It looks so."

"How did it happen?"

"I was lying on my bed before lighting up, and I heard a knock on the door," Draper proceeded to explain. "I did not bother to answer it, nor a second one, and then I heard him sneak in here. He switched on the light and began to search your desk. Then I held him up—and here he is."

Doctor Guelpa came a little nearer and glared down at Patsy.

Patsy gave him stare for stare.

"Keep him covered, Draper," said the physician, with ominous quietude. "So you're a thief, are you?"

"What's the use of denying it?" asked Patsy. "I've told that gink with a gun that——"

"Never mind what you told him," Guelpa interrupted, more sharply. "Shoot him instantly, Draper, if he stirs. We can say we caught him committing a robbery."

"That's what I told him," grinned Draper.

"Very likely he's the scamp who stole Falloni's diamonds," added Guelpa, more sharply watching Patsy's face.

It underwent no change evincing his identity and designs.

"I'd be a fall guy, for fair, if I came in here after getting away with that batch of jewels," he said derisively.

"Keep him covered, Draper," Guelpa repeated. "I'll find out who he is."

He came nearer to Patsy, then suddenly seized one side of his mustache and jerked it from his lip.

Patsy uttered an involuntary cry of pain.

Guelpa gazed at him more sharply, with countenance turning as dark as a thundercloud, while his teeth met with a sudden, sharp snap.

"Ah, I see!" he exclaimed, half in his throat. "You're one of those detectives whom I saw this morning. You're that fellow Garvan."

Patsy realized that he had nothing to gain by denying it. He laughed indifferently and replied:

"I guess that calls the turn, doctor."

"I know it does, not guess it," snapped Guelpa. "What do you want here?"

"I wanted to see you."

"For what?"

"To find out whether you have learned anything more about the robbery, or whether you have any suspicion."

"Did Nick Carter send you?"

"No. I came on my own hook."

"You lie, you whelp," Guelpa now said harshly. "You act only under his instructions. There can be only one reason for your coming here and breaking into my apartments. Carter thinks I know something about the robbery, or suspects me of having committed it. Isn't that right?"

"Right for him to suspect you?" asked Patsy, undaunted by the blaze that had arisen in the physician's eyes.

"Don't josh me, Garvan, nor try to evade me," Guelpa fiercely threatened. "If you do, I'll have your infernal life. Tell me—does Carter think I committed that robbery?"

"How can I tell?" retorted Patsy defiantly. "I'm not a mind reader."

"You know what he suspects."

"No, I don't," Patsy insisted. "There is one thing I do know, however."

"What is that?"

"That if he suspects you, Doctor Guelpa, he never so much as mentioned it to me."

"Is that true?"

"True as gospel," said Patsy; and it was.

Doctor Guelpa hesitated for a moment, while Draper put in with an assurance evincing his relations with the other:

"Don't swallow that, doc, not on your life. It's all bunk. He would not be here, not sneaking in as I caught him, if Carter had not sent him."

"Do you think so?"

"I think it's a cinch."

Doctor Guelpa gazed again at Patsy. His ferocity had vanished, but there now was a gleam in his eyes that was thrice more threatening. He paused for a moment with brows darkly knit, then said abruptly:

"You may be right, Draper. Watch the whelp. I'll fix him."

"I'll watch him, all right," returned Draper, with a warning scowl.

"Gee! I'm in wrong now, for fair," thought Patsy, thoroughly disgusted with the turn of the situation. "Fix me, eh? I wonder what's coming. The infernal rascal has something up his sleeve. Infernal rascal is right, too, and I wish I had phoned the chief before butting in here."

Doctor Guelpa had approached a wall cabinet directly behind Patsy, who could not then see what the physician was doing.

He had opened the cabinet and taken from it a small vial and graduated glasses, into which he was pouring a quantity of brown fluid.

Having obtained the desired quantity, he transferred it from the glass, into a hypodermic syringe, the needle of which he carefully inspected.

Patsy waited a bit apprehensive all the while.

Draper watched him as a cat watches a mouse.

Doctor Guelpa closed the cabinet, then turned again toward Patsy.

"I don't feel sure you are telling the truth, Garvan," he said, with affected uncertainty. "If I did, I would be willing to meet you halfway and discuss this matter——"

"But I'm giving it to you straight," Patsy insisted, interrupting. "Nick doesn't suspect you."

"Doesn't he?"

"He does not, Doctor Guelpa, on the level. He has not even thought of you in connection with the robbery."

"Before he does, then, I'll make sure to get him and put him away. That can be done—as easily as this."

Standing with the syringe concealed in one hand, Guelpa suddenly bowed and threw his arm around Patsy's head, at the same time thrust the needle into his neck.

Patsy vented a growl and began to struggle, despite that Draper clapped the muzzle of the revolver against his breast.

The injection so quickly administered was a powerful one, however, and acted instantly. It sent a tingling sensation through Patsy's veins. His strength deserted him, seeming to fly out through his toes and fingers. He tried to shout for help, but his tongue was palsied. Only a hollow gurgle came from his twitching lips.

Then, for it was all over in ten seconds, the light vanished, Guelpa's half-smothered imprecations turned to silence, the grasp of merciless hands no longer could be felt, and Patsy lapsed into the realm of utter oblivion and was lowered to the floor, as limp and ghastly as if life had left him.

Doctor Guelpa straightened up and laid aside the syringe, while Draper thrust the revolver into his pocket.

"Easily done, doc, is right," he said, grinning. "This was the only way. The meddlesome rat must have picked up a thread of some kind that led him here. There was nothing for us but to dispose of him before he could hand his information to others."

"He meant it, nevertheless, when he said that Carter does not suspect me," Doctor Guelpa declared. "We must get him, then, before he does suspect. It afterward might be too late."

"That's right, too," Draper agreed quickly. "But can it be done?"

"It must be done," Guelpa coolly insisted. "I know how and will turn the trick."

"And then?"

"This game that we have been playing must be continued. We must throttle suspicion where we find it, and choke the cursed weed before it can spread."

"That's the stuff, all right."

"We must maintain our position and good standing here, Draper, or it will be a case of bolt for us, with the police of the world out to get us. That won't do at all,

Draper, not at all. We must bluff suspicion to a standstill, or down it with a club."

"I'm with you all the while," said Draper approvingly. "I reckon we can make good. But what's to be done with this pup?"

"Pull out the empty trunk," said Guelpa. "We'll crowd him into it and ship him to my office, then lug it into Biddle's quarters. Ring for a porter to lend you a hand with the trunk to the elevator. I'll remark to him, or to any other inquisitive observer, that it takes too much room in my suite."

"That can be done in ten minutes," nodded Draper, hastening to bring one of the large trunks from the adjoining room.

Doctor Guelpa smoothed his slightly ruffled coat and bestowed a kick upon the senseless form of the detective.

"Dead easy," said he, replying. "Cram him into it and lock it. I'll get Scoville on the phone, in the meantime, and have him come round here with a wagon."

Patsy Garvan heard none of this.

He was lying with his face upturned in the bright electric light, a face as ghastly as that of a corpse.

CHAPTER VII.

A LEAF FROM THE PAST.

"Wait here. I may send you instructions."

These were Nick Carter's brief instructions to Chick, in fact, when he left his Madison Avenue residence at seven o'clock that evening, to seek an interview with the woman who, he suspected, could supply him with a clew to the identity of Chester Clayton's double, if not with positive information concerning him.

Danny Maloney, the detective's chauffeur, was waiting at the curbing with his touring car. Nick gave him the necessary directions, resulting in his alighting half an hour later in front of the attractive home of Mrs. Julia Clayton, who had fainted so suddenly in Mademoiselle Falloni's suite that morning.

"You may wait, Danny," said Nick. "I don't think I shall be very long."

"Long, or short, chief, you'll find me here," replied Danny.

Nick strode up the gravel walk to the front door and rang the bell. Lights in the hall and one in the side rooms denoted that Mrs. Clayton had returned.

"I hope I may find her alone, or that Chester Clayton is not here," Nick said to himself, while waiting. "She seemed averse this morning to talking of the matter in his presence. That's one reason why I suspected that she——"

Nick's train of thought was broken by a shadow on the figured-glass panel of the door, which was opened by a pretty servant girl in a white apron and starched cap.

"I wish to see Mrs. Clayton," Nick informed her.

"Mrs. Clayton is not at home this evening, sir," said the girl, a bit oddly.

"Not at home?"

"No, sir."

Nick eyed her more sharply.

"Do you mean that she is not here, or not seeing callers?" he inquired pleasantly.

"Well, sir, she——"

The girl faltered, blushing confusedly, and Nick added kindly:

"I understand. Take my card to her, please, and say that it is very important that I should see her. I think she will consent."

The girl obeyed, returning in a very few moments.

"Walk in, sir," she then said, smiling again. "Mrs. Clayton will see you in the library. This way, sir."

Nick was ushered into the attractively furnished room, where he found Mrs. Julia Clayton still gazing gravely at the card he had sent in. There was something irresistibly impressive about her, a mingling of dignity and secret sadness that the detective's sensitive nature was quick to appreciate, even while conscious of her remarkable beauty and womanly grace.

She arose immediately to greet him, extending her hand and saying:

"If I had known it was you, Mr. Carter, my servant would have been told not to keep you waiting. I have had a most distressing day, and I did not feel that I could see callers. I assure you, nevertheless, that I am very glad to see you."

"Thank you," Nick replied, bowing.

"For I am deeply indebted to you," Mrs. Clayton added feelingly. "Chester telephoned to me after his arrest and liberation on bail. It is very kind of you to feel such an interest in him, and to use your influence in his behalf."

"He is my client," smiled Nick, taking a chair she placed for him. "I couldn't do less than I have done."

"But in spite of such adverse circumstances, Mr. Carter, and the fact that so many think him guilty," she replied. "You are one man in a hundred. I know that he is innocent, of course, but I don't know how I ever can repay you for your faith in him."

"I will tell you how, Mrs. Clayton," Nick said, more gravely.

"Tell me how?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean?"

"Let me begin by—pardon!" Nick broke off abruptly. "Will you permit me to close the door?"

"Yes, of course, if——"

Nick arose when she faltered, quietly closing it, then resumed his seat.

"Servants are not always trustworthy, you know, and discretion is always advisable," he remarked. "Now, Mrs. Clayton, I will tell you what I mean."

"Well, sir?"

"Let me begin, however, by stating that anything you say to me will be received in strict and inviolable confidence. Not even to save your son from conviction and a prison sentence, Mrs. Clayton, would I, without your permission, reveal any facts that you may disclose. You must be frank with me, therefore, and tell me what I may find it absolutely necessary to know, in order to save him."

Mrs. Clayton had turned very pale and was trembling visibly.

"This is a strange beginning, Mr. Carter," she replied. "What do you expect me to disclose?"

"Only the truth, Mrs. Clayton."

"About what?"

"Your son's double," said Nick. "The man who so resembles Chester Clayton that he could perpetrate the crime

committed this morning. Who is this man? What do you know about him?"

The woman's fine face hardened perceptibly. She appeared to nerve herself to meet a threatening situation, to oppose with tooth and nail, if necessary, the disclosures the detective evidently was determined to evoke. She drew up a little in her chair, replying more coldly:

"That seems quite impossible, Mr. Carter. What put that into your head?"

"You did," said Nick quietly.

"I did?"

"Yes."

"Impossible! When?"

"When you met your son this morning, Mrs. Clayton, and fainted upon learning that the robbery was committed by a man so like him that—but you could not say more," Nick broke off. "You fell to the floor in a faint."

"That is true, I admit, Mr. Carter——"

"And you also must admit, Mrs. Clayton, that the circumstances and your own words permit of no other interpretation," Nick interrupted, more impressively.

"But——"

"Oh, I am not going to argue that point with you," Nick again insisted. "I am going to make you see the matter just as it stands. Your son's reputation and liberty are at stake. So is my reputation as a detective. Only the truth can save him. Unless you are willing to aid me by disclosing it, I shall have no alternative but to drop the case entirely and let others try to pull him out of the fire. If they fail——"

"Wait! You have said enough, Mr. Carter."

Nick would not have done what he threatened, but he detected in the changed face of the woman that the threat would prove effective.

For Mrs. Clayton, though ghastly pale and with trembling lips as gray as ashes, took on a look of sudden determination, that of a woman who felt herself driven to the wall.

"I will tell you the truth," she added, more firmly.

"You may safely do so," Nick now said kindly. "It will go no further."

"I shrink from it, Mr. Carter, chiefly for the sake of one man."

"Your son?"

"Yes. I implore you to keep the truth from him, if that will be possible. I have kept it from him all his life."

"I will endeavor to do so," Nick assured her.

"I will tell you with few words, then, my unfortunate history," Mrs. Clayton said, more calmly. "I was an English girl and lived in an outskirt of London. I was married when I was nineteen to a man I did not love, but who so had involved my father in financial difficulties that I became his wife in order to save my father from bankruptcy and dishonor."

"I can appreciate the sacrifice," Nick said gravely.

"My father died within a year," Mrs. Clayton continued. "He and I were all that were left of our family. Three months later, Mr. Carter, I became the mother of twin boys."

"Ah," said Nick, "that is what I have suspected! Do not distress yourself by telling me too many details, Mrs. Clayton," he added considerately. "The essential facts are all that I want."

"They may be briefly told, Mr. Carter," she said, with a grateful look at him. "My husband was a bad man, much worse than I even dreamed of when I married him. I discovered his despicable character much too late."

"Was he a criminal?"

"Yes."

"May I know his name?"

"Why not? He has been dead many years. His name was Gideon Margate."

Nick had heard of him, a notorious English crook, who had died in a German prison something like ten years before. He considerately suppressed the fact that he knew of the man, however, and said kindly:

"You are in no degree culpable, Mrs. Clayton, for the mistakes and misdeeds of your husband. What more can you tell me?"

"Two years after the birth of my children, Mr. Carter, my husband disappeared, taking with him one of my sons," she replied. "I never saw Gideon Margate again."

"Nor the child?"

"The child was named David. I will not undertake to tell you what I suffered from losing him, from my inability to trace him, and from my terrible fear of the life to which he would be bred."

"That of a criminal?"

"Yes."

"And your fears came true?"

"Terribly so."

"Tell me the bare facts?"

"I took my maiden name, Julia Clayton, about a year after my husband disappeared," she continued. "I suspected that he was in America, and in the hope of recovering my other son, we came here, and since have lived here. I have been in England only once since then, and that was twelve years ago. I then saw in a London newspaper the picture of a criminal who had just been sent to prison for five years for burglary."

"You recognized him?"

"Yes."

"Your son?"

"David Margate—yes."

"Did you see him personally, or do anything about it?"

"Neither," said Mrs. Clayton sadly. "What could I do? The die was cast. My husband had shaped the boy's life. That he should become a criminal after arriving at the age of judgment and discretion showed only too plainly that he had inherited Gideon Margate's criminal traits."

"I agree with you," said Nick.

"Thank God!" Mrs. Clayton fervently added; "he left me the child who had inherited my own character. Chester Clayton is above knavery and crime."

"I agree with you again," said Nick. "Now, Mrs. Clayton, let's come to the points bearing upon his case. Does Chester know anything about his father and twin brother?"

"No, no, indeed," she said quickly. "He knows only that his father is dead. He does not so much as dream that he has a brother. I could not cloud his life, mar his whole future, perhaps, by acknowledging David Margate to be my son, when I learned that he was in an English prison. It would have been an injustice to Chester Clayton. The sacrifice would have been too great."

"That is true," Nick agreed. "Have you ever seen David Margate or heard anything concerning him since he was convicted in London?"

"No, I have not."

"You have no reason to believe that he is in New York, then, aside from the resemblance of the criminal who committed this jewel robbery."

"That is my only reason. You now can appreciate why I was overcome and fainted when told of the circumstances this morning," said Mrs. Clayton."

"That is perfectly plain," Nick nodded. "I think, too, that we now have covered all of the ground that is material at this time. I will be governed by what you have confided to me, and will do all that I can to prevent the facts from leaking out. You may depend upon that."

"I have no words with which to thank you, Mr. Carter."

"Don't try," said Nick, smiling. "Assuming that the criminal in this case is Chester's twin brother, and despite that he ran across him and observed the resemblance that made the crime possible, I think it is quite probable that he does not suspect the relationship. Your husband very likely never told him about you and Chester."

"Do you really think so, Mr. Carter?"

"I do," said Nick. "Men do not often reveal their own baseness, not even to a son. I doubt very much that David Margate knows anything about his early history."

"I hope so, I am sure, for Chester's sake."

"Do you know under what name he was convicted in London?"

"I do not. I cannot recall it."

"Was it a fictitious name?"

"Yes."

"I will try to learn something definite about him," said Nick. "I appreciate your confidence in me, too, and I will rigidly respect it. That is all I can say to you this evening about the case, but I will leave no stone unturned to bring it to a desirable termination, particularly in so far as you and Chester Clayton are concerned."

Mrs. Clayton again thanked him feelingly, then remarked:

"I was somewhat surprised late this afternoon by a call from another man whom I saw in Mademoiselle Falloni's suite this morning."

"There was only one other man, except Chester," said Nick. "You refer to Doctor Guelpa."

"Yes."

"He called here to see you?"

"Yes, about five o'clock."

"Did he say for what reason?"

"He said that he was riding out this way and thought he would call and see if I had entirely recovered. He did all he could to revive me this morning, you know."

Nick's brows knit a little closer.

"Yes, I remember," he replied. "Did he say anything about the crime, or concerning Clayton?"

"No, nothing of any consequence, Mr. Carter. He mentioned you, however, just before he left."

"Mentioned me, eh? What did he say?"

"Only that you were very kind to stand up for Clayton under such circumstances. He asked, too, whether you had been out here to see me."

"H'm, is that so?" thought Nick. "I was right, then, in thinking that he deduced something from this woman's impulsive words and her sudden collapse. He suspected that I did, also, and he evidently fears that I may learn something from her. Where there is cause for fear, there are grounds for suspicion. He may be the very man, the very hotel guest whom I——"

Nick ended his shrewd deductions by glancing quickly around the room. He discovered what he wanted—a telephone on a stand in one corner.

"Before I go, Mrs. Clayton, may I trouble you for a glass of water," he requested carelessly.

"Why, yes, certainly," she replied, rising. "I will get it for you."

"Thank you."

Nick watched her sweep gracefully from the room.

Then, quickly stepping to the telephone, he hooded the mouth with his hand and called up his library. Within half a minute he had Chick on the wire, but he spoke only these words:

"No time for particulars. Go to the Westgate. Watch Doctor Guelpa."

The answer came instantly:

"I've got you."

Nick resumed his seat just as Mrs. Clayton was returning through the hall.

"It will be better, much better, if she never knows," he said to himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

NICK WALKS INTO A NET.

It was half past eight that evening when Nick Carter, returning from his interview with Mrs. Clayton, arrived at his Madison Avenue residence.

A taxicab was waiting at the curbing in front of the house, and Nick was momentarily surprised when he entered his library. Its only occupant was the visitor who had come in the taxi.

"Why, good evening, Clayton," he said genially. "I was not expecting a call from you so quickly. I am pleased to see you, all the same."

One thought that had instantly arisen in Nick's mind, however, in view of his talk with Mrs. Clayton, was not reflected in his face. The thought was:

"Which one is this? Chester Clayton—or his crook double?"

Clayton, as he certainly appeared to be, replied without hesitation, without any observably intent scrutiny of the detective's face.

"I have a reason for calling, Nick," said he. "Your butler told me that you would probably return during the evening, so I requested the privilege of waiting here."

"Quite right, Clayton, I'm sure."

"He could not tell me, however, where you had gone," Clayton added, in a way covertly inviting the detective to do so.

Nick did not do so, however, but he was quick to observe the insinuating remark and draw a natural conclusion, one that he made doubly sure did not appear in his face.

"Well, that's not strange, Clayton," he replied, laughing. "I had no definite destination when I went out. Besides, I seldom tell my butler where I am going, unless my mission relates to a case in which my assistants are employed. Then I usually leave word for them, as I would have done this evening, had that been the case."

A momentary gleam, the sinister light of secret relief and satisfaction, showed like a fleeting flash in the depths of his visitor's eyes.

"It does not matter in the least, Nick, now that you have returned," he said quickly.

"What's on your mind?" asked Nick, taking a chair. "You said you have a reason for coming here."

"So I have," said Clayton, more earnestly. "I think I have a clew to the crook who got the jewels."

"By Jove, is that so?"

"The chance is worth taking."

"What do you mean? What kind of a clew?" asked Nick, with manifest interest.

"It came from a woman friend of mine early this evening," Clayton proceeded to explain. "She talked with me by telephone. I have not seen her."

"Who is she? What is her name?"

"Grace Alcott. She's an old flame, a girl with whom I have always been quite friendly. I know her to be reliable."

"What did she tell you?" Nick inquired.

"She said she had information for me bearing upon the robbery. She intimated, in fact, that she could put me in a way to nail the crook and recover the stolen jewels."

"Well, well, that would be going some," declared Nick, apparently becoming more enthusiastic. "Have you any faith in her statements, Clayton?"

"Enough to send me here, Nick," was the reply. "One other reason is the fact that she lives just around the corner from the business quarters of a guest in the hotel."

"I see the point. What guest?"

"The physician you met this morning."

"Doctor Guelpa."

"Did she mention his name, or hint at him?"

"No, nothing of that kind."

"Why did you not go to see her, then, instead of coming here?" Nick inquired.

"For two reasons," Clayton now explained, more hurriedly. "One, because you are handling this case and I feared that I might interfere with you if I butted in and did something of which you were ignorant."

"I see."

"Another, because Grace said I had better bring a detective with me, as he would more quickly appreciate the points she wanted to lay before me, and that he also would know what should be done."

"She wanted you to call on her, then?"

"Yes, indeed, as soon as possible," nodded Clayton. "I grabbed a taxi and rushed down here, therefore, hoping that you would go with me. I thought that was the best thing for me to do."

"I guess it was," Nick quickly agreed.

"Will you go?"

"Yes, yes, Clayton, by all means," assented the detective. "There may be something in this. We cannot afford to leave any stone unturned. The sooner we go, too, the better."

"Good enough. My taxi is outside."

"Come on, then, and we'll be off. I'll not even wait to tell my butler where I am going," Nick added, with a laugh, as they hurried out of his office.

Clayton joined with him in the laugh and followed him into the taxicab. He evidently had given the driver his instructions, for he made no move to do so. He remarked, as they settled back on the seat and rode away:

"I hope this won't prove to be a wild-goose chase, Nick, after all."

"It ought not, surely," Nick replied. "You say you know the girl to be reliable?"

"I have always found her so."

"How old is she?"

"About thirty."

"Old enough, then, to have sense and judgment."

"So I think," nodded Clayton. "That's why I feel hopeful."

"She lives back of Doctor Guelpa's business establishment, you said?"

"Yes, directly back of it, Nick."

"How long have you known the physician?" Nick questioned, and he instantly detected the readiness with which his companion took up the subject.

"Oh, for months, Nick," was the reply.

"He appears to be all right, doesn't he?"

"Yes, yes, surely! Otherwise, I would not have him in my hotel."

"I presume so. It may be, nevertheless, that Miss Alcott has discovered something about him of a derogatory nature, her home being so near his business office."

"Possibly," Clayton allowed; then, with a furtive glance at Nick's inscrutable face: "He appeared all right to you this morning, didn't he?"

"Yes, indeed," Nick declared. "He appeared like a perfect gentleman."

"You saw no reason to suspect him?"

"Far from it, Clayton."

"I guess Miss Alcott's clew, if she really has any, relates to some one else, or something else," Clayton now said, with less obvious interest.

"Most likely," Nick agreed.

"We shall very soon find out."

"True."

"Have you formed any other suspicions since I last saw you?"

"No, none whatever," said Nick. "I still am in the dark."

Clayton did not add to his inquiries.

It was nine o'clock when the taxicab drew up in front of the house to which the chauffeur had been directed. He at once was dismissed by Clayton, who was the first to alight, and he then led the way up the steps and rang the bell.

It was answered by a well-built, powerful man in evening dress, whose dark features were only faintly discernible in the dimly lighted hall.

"Good evening, Scoville," said Clayton. "I think Miss Alcott is expecting me."

"Oh, it is you, Mr. Clayton," was the reply. "Yes, sir, she is. Walk in, gentlemen, and come this way."

"The butler, Nick," Clayton whispered, taking the detective's arm.

Nick nodded indifferently and allowed himself to be conducted through the hall.

Scoville turned into the nearest room, a front parlor, the others following.

"One moment, gentlemen," said he. "I'll switch on the light."

He did so while speaking, and Nick Carter then saw into what sort of a net he had walked—but entirely voluntarily.

Three men with ready revolvers were confronting him.

Scoville instantly drew another.

Clayton, or Clayton's double, quickly closed the door

through which they had entered, then turned and said sharply:

"Now, Carter, throw up your hands! If you show fight, you'll go down and out on the instant."

Nick raised his hands and backed against the wall. He appeared to be greatly surprised and equally resentful.

"What's the meaning of this, Clayton?" he demanded; and the mention of the name brought laughs from the others.

They were Draper, Biddle, and Scoville, who had been mentioned by Doctor Guelpa in his apartments, also a third man who had had a hand in the robbery, one Joe Gaines.

"Oh, I'm not Clayton, Carter," was the derisive reply. "I'm the man who looks like him. I'm the crook who got away with the sparks."

"Good heavens!" Nick exclaimed, in seemingly increased amazement. "Is it possible?"

"You bet it's possible!" cried Guelpa, with a sinister nod. "It's more than that; it's a fact. When I run across a man who looks so near like me that I can see no difference, I'm the sort of a covey who makes the most of it. You didn't suspect Doctor Guelpa, eh? Carter, we've put it all over you. I'm Guelpa."

"You?" questioned Nick, still as if astonished.

"That's what, Carter, as sure as you're a foot high," the rascal declared, with an exultant leer. "Come out a little from that wall. Keep your hands hooks up, mind you, or you'll have no further use for them. Either of these fellows would kill you at the first sign of violence. I shall do so a little later, at all events, so I don't mind putting you wise to the whole business."

"That's very good of you," Nick now replied coldly.

"Slip in behind him, Biddle, and get his weapons," Guelpa commanded. "Fish out his darbies, also, and snap them on his wrists. Egad! could one have more satisfaction than in doing a dick with his own bracelets?"

"Not much more, doc!" cried Draper, laughing.

"Dukes behind him, Biddle. I told you I'd get him, Draper," Guelpa triumphantly added, while two of the crooks hastened to secure the detective.

"You made good, all right."

"He isn't in my class."

"Few dicks are, doc, as far as that goes."

"Why, he told me on the way here that he didn't suspect me," cried Guelpa derisively. "We've got him dead to rights, then. He can have handed nothing to others about me."

"Surely not."

"And we'll make dead sure that he never will. I suppose you wonder, Carter, what we are doing in this house."

"Well, not seriously," said Nick, with mocking indifference.

"It's back of my business quarters, just as I told you."

"You told the truth once, then, at least," Nick said dryly.

"Yes, sure," cried Guelpa, laughing again. "This makes a good retreat for us in case of danger. That throat-specialist gag is all phoney, a colossal bluff. I had to pose in some impressive character. We can slip from my office into this house, or the reverse, in two shakes of a lamb's tail. We're the bunch who got the sparks, Carter, all right, and now we've got you."

"Yes, that's very obvious," said Nick, coolly taking a chair. "Since you are so communicative, Guelpa, if that's your name, suppose you tell me how you got away with the jewel cases so quickly."

"Why not?" leered Guelpa, while the others laughed as if they enjoyed the detective's blindness. "Scoville was the stranger who held Clayton in his private office. My room is on the same floor with Clayton's. I've got garments like his. Never mind how and when I got them."

"No, it's not material," Nick allowed dryly.

"Not at all, Carter, of course. I merely stole down the stairs, clad like Clayton, and got the first casket. Biddle, disguised as a laundress and provided with a big, covered basket, relieved me of it in the corridor, and got away with it in the basket."

"Ah, I see," Nick nodded.

"I then got the other and whisked it up to my rooms," added Guelpa. "Then I hurried into my own clothing and my Hungarian hair and whiskers, and I was right on the spot when wanted by lovely Mademoiselle Falloni when she fainted. Could anything have been easier? Why, it was like money sent from home."

"It does appear so, Guelpa, I admit.

"I wonder you have not thought of it, Carter," grinned the rascal.

Nick's eyes took on a more threatening gleam. He now felt sure that this man did not suspect his relationship with Clayton, or know anything definite about his early life, as he already had predicted to Mrs. Clayton.

"Oh, I have thought of it, Guelpa," he said, a bit curtly. "Don't think me quite a lunkhead. I knew the crook had garments and a pin like Clayton's. I know also when the scarfpin was duplicated. It was when you rascals abducted Clayton three months ago."

Guelpa's face changed like a flash.

"How did you learn that?" he cried.

"I have methods of my own for obtaining information."

"You have, eh?"

"And that's not all I know, Guelpa," Nick added.

"Is that so?"

"Far from it."

"Tell me, then, as I told you."

Guelpa spoke with a scornful sneer, but looks of apprehension had arisen to the faces of his four confederates.

"Why not, then, as you said?" Nick retorted. "Don't imagine for a moment, Guelpa, that you lured me blindly into a net. I knew the instant I saw you in my office this evening that you were not Chester Clayton."

"Rot!" cried Guelpa derisively. "If you knew that, why did you walk into the trap?"

"So as to get a line on your confederates, these fellows," said Nick curtly.

"I don't believe it."

"I will tell you, then, something that you will believe," said Nick.

"What is that?"

"That your name is not Guelpa. Your true name is David Margate. You are an English crook. You were convicted of burglary twelve years ago, and sent up for five years. You are——"

"Stop!" cried Margate, ghastly white. "How did you learn that? How do you know——"

"Oh, I know that you rascals will not get away with

this job," Nick sternly interrupted. "I'll soon have you landed where——"

Guelpa, or Margate, broke in upon him with a terrible oath.

"You will, eh?" he fiercely added. "You'll find you are wrong. You are depending upon that fellow, Garvan, but we've got him, also, as we've got you. See for yourself."

He flung aside the portière that hung across the open door of an adjoining room, then in darkness.

Plainly visible in the light shed through the doorway, however, sat Patsy Garvan, bound and gagged and tied to a wooden chair. This was two hours after he had been transferred from the hotel, and his recovery from the drug Guelpa had injected.

"And that's not all," Guelpa fiercely added. "Spring open that panel, Biddle. Let him see—let him see for himself!"

Biddle touched a hidden spring in the wainscoted wall, and a panel flew open.

In the space beyond sat—the two jewel caskets stolen from the Hotel Westgate that morning.

"We've not had time to open them, to whack up the swag," Guelpa went on, as if beside himself with fierce and bitter rage. "There will be time enough for that. We've got Garvan and we've got you. I'll send you to the devil on the spot. I'll give you a dose that will—oh, perdition, Scoville, I've left it in my suite. I went out in such a hurry that I forgot it. I must have it. It's the only thing that will cause death and defy detection. I must have it. I'll go and get it. Watch me—watch both till I return. And remember the signal—the signal! I'll send both to the devil. Wait till I return."

And Doctor Guelpa, after pouring forth these commands with a ferocity that precluded interruption, turned and rushed like a madman out of the house.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MAN ON THE BED.

It was more than an hour previous to the episodes last described, when Chick Carter responded to Nick's brief instructions from Mrs. Clayton's residence, and then set out post-haste for the Hotel Westgate.

He did not know, of course, why Nick had been led to suspect Guelpa, nor anything about what Patsy had discovered and what had befallen him. That Nick suspected Guelpa, however, and very seriously, Chick had not a doubt.

It was not eight o'clock when he approached the huge hotel, and purely by a stroke of good luck, nearing a side entrance to the house, he discovered the very man he was seeking.

Doctor Guelpa had just emerged and was hurrying away.

"By Jove, fortune favors me," thought Chick, with a thrill of satisfaction. "This is better than I could have hoped. There must be something in the wind, or he would not be in such a hurry. If he gives me the slip, however, I'll eat my hat. I'd give something to know what Nick has on him."

Chick knew, however, that he needed only to follow the directions given him.

With no great difficulty, he shadowed Guelpa to his office in Fifth Avenue, a walk of about six minutes, and saw him enter the dark rooms, those on the first floor of a remodeled house.

Much to Chick's surprise, however, after waiting and watching for several minutes, no light appeared at either of the windows.

"By gracious, that's mighty strange," he said to himself, then concealed in an opposite doorway. "Is he remaining in there in darkness? What's his game, in that case, and why is he—great guns! there he is, now!"

Doctor Guelpa had come hurrying around the near corner, and was evidently returning to the hotel.

Chick shadowed him again, but not without a quick survey of the opposite house and the adjoining buildings.

"I'll swear he did not come out of that house," he said to himself. "There is no way of getting to a back entrance from the avenue. There may be an alley leading in from the side street. Either that, or he went through the first house around the corner. Later, by Jove, I may discover which. The game seems to have just broken cover."

Chick followed Guelpa back to the hotel and saw him enter his suite.

Not content with that, wondering what he might be doing, he crept to the door and peered through the keyhole.

The aperture, though limited, commanded a view of the parlor and the bedroom directly beyond it. Both were brightly lighted—and Chick saw enough to warrant all of the suspicions he had attributed to Nick.

He saw the man within discarding his Guelpa disguise and transforming himself into a counterfeit of Chester Clayton.

"Thundering guns!" he said to himself. "This does settle it. But what's his next move?"

Chick concealed himself to wait and see.

Ten minutes later Guelpa stole down the side stairs and out of the house. He was just in time to catch a passing taxicab.

Chick reached the side door just in time, moreover, to hear Guelpa shout his hurried directions to the chauffeur.

"Great Scott!" he muttered, pausing. "To Nick's residence! Why the dickens is he going there? By Jove, I have it! He has discovered that Nick suspects him and he now is out to get him. He reasons that he can fool the old war horse and get by as Clayton.

"I may be wrong, but I'll wager that he will get well fooled himself. It's now a thousand to one that he went to some house near his office, probabaly the one back of it, in order to make arrangements for holding up the chief. By gracious, that's good enough for me to take a chance on. I'll hike back there and await developments. There would be nothing in nailing that rascal alone. If I am right, which seems more than probable, we can get the whole gang by this other course."

Chick knew, of course, assuming that his theory was correct, that some little time must elapse before Guelpa could return in company with Nick. He did not hurry his investigation, therefore.

He returned to Fifth Avenue and had another look at Doctor Guelpa's business quarters.

They were in darkness, as before, with no sign of life within.

"I'll see what I can discover around the corner," Chick said to himself. "The rat went out that way, I'll wager."

His investigations in that direction took him much

longer. He could find no way of getting to the rear of the house to which Nick was later brought. It had, as a matter of fact, been boarded up by the rascals.

Chick then went back and picked the lock of Guelpa's door, entering and seeking the rear exit.

He then found that it led to the rear door of the other house.

Chick arrived there just in time, moreover, to hear from the back area the arrival of Nick and Guelpa, both of whose voices he immediately recognized.

"This does settle it," he congratulated himself. "I'll get in there and hold up the whole gang. If I can get all of them under my guns—well, there'll be nothing more to it."

It took Chick some little time, however, to noiselessly force a rear basement window.

The scene in the front parlor was in rapid progress all the while.

Chick got in unheard and was stealing up to the adjoining room, just as Guelpa rushed out of the house.

It was impossible to stop him, but Chick had heard enough to show him the way.

The four men in the front parlor then were in animated discussion of what had been said. Thy had no thought of another intruder. The portière masking the door of the rear room had fallen back into place.

Chick crept into the room from the hall, and he then discovered Patsy Garvan bound to the chair. He stole nearer and liberated him, then slipped him one of his revolvers.

Not a word passed between them.

Ten seconds later, however, the portière was flung aside and both detectives stepped into the room, with revolvers leveled.

"No monkey business, gentlemen!" Chick now said sharply. "The first man who moves will be a dead one! We'll shoot to kill!"

The threat was sufficient, or the guns.

Only one of the rascals moved, save to throw up his hands.

Scoville edged nearer the hall door, but stood with his back against it, a position certainly not inviting suspicion.

"Good work, Chick," Nick said simply, after the crooks had been handcuffed and he had been liberated. "It is about what I was expecting."

"We've landed with both feet," declared Patsy. "All we now want is the master crook, the rat who jabbed that needle in my neck."

"We'll get him, all right," said Nick. "Get those jewel cases, Patsy, and we'll head for the hotel. You remain here, Chick, and hold up the rascal if he returns. I'll have policemen here on the quiet in a very few moments. I'll not risk losing the rascal by not following him."

"I'm with you, chief," said Patsy.

Three minutes later four policemen entered the house and took the crooks in charge.

Chick continued to wait for Guelpa.

Nick Carter and Patsy entered the Westgate a few minutes later. The first man they saw was Clayton, in the office inclosure.

"Good God!" he cried excitedly, seeing the jewel cases. "You've got them, Carter, you've got them! When and how——"

Nick checked him with a gesture and placed the cases on the counter.

"Put them in the vault, Vernon, and lock it!" he commanded, turning to the thunderstruck head clerk. "You come with me, Clayton, and be quick about it."

Clayton leaped over the counter and Nick ran to the elevator.

"I'll show you your double, Clayton, unless I am much mistaken," said he, as the car sped up to the fourth floor.

"My double?" gasped Clayton.

"That's what. A fellow who looks like you. There's nothing more to it."

"This way, chief," Patsy whispered, as they left the car. "I know his door. Gee whiz! I ought to."

They arrived at it in a moment.

A light was burning in the suite.

Patsy quietly unlocked the door with his picklock, and the three men rushed through the parlor and into the bedroom.

An unconscious man was lying on the bed.

"Guelpa himself!" cried Patsy. "By thunder, chief, he has committed suicide."

"If he has," replied Nick, "he will have saved himself a prison term. Ring for Detective Webber. We'll give the rascal in his charge."

"I can't wait—I can't wait for that," cried Clayton, in a frenzy of joy. "I must telephone to my mother. I must telephone to Mademoiselle Falloni. The joyous news must not be delayed. I'll return in a couple of minutes, Carter. My God! how can I ever repay you?"

"Let him go and spread the news," laughed Nick, as Patsy turned from the house telephone. "The crooks are booked to get theirs. As for this rascal and his—ah, here is Webber now. Look after this scoundrel, Webber, and put him where he belongs. No, no; don't ask me to discuss the case at present. We have made good, all right, and that enough for now. As for us, Patsy, we'll compare notes in my library, in company with Chick."

THE END.

You will read more of the mysterious David Margate in "The Blue Veil; or, Nick Carter's Torn Trail," which is the title of the long, complete story you will find in the next issue, No. 158, of the NICK CARTER STORIES, out September 18th. You will also find an installment of the corking serial now running, together with several other interesting articles.

A BAD BOY.

For precocity, irrepressibility, and too often depravity, "Young America" in these days can hardly be surpassed. Here is a story told me the other day: A little chap, not eight years old, whose parents live in one of the fashionable parts of New York, went last week to pay a visit to his grandmother. While there, in rummaging through his grandmother's secretaire, he came across a half dollar, and shortly afterward he was on his way downstairs to invest his "find." He expended the whole amount in candy, and, upon his return, was enjoying it in the privacy of his room, when his grandmother put in an appearance.

"Why, Robby," she exclaimed, taking in the situation, "where on earth did you get all that candy?"

"Bought it," was the reply.

"But where did you get the money?"

"A gentleman I met in the street gave it to me."

"Robby, I don't believe you are telling me the truth," said the old lady slowly, looking her grandson in the eyes. "In fact, I am sure you are telling me a falsehood. A little bird tells me that you are."

The boy looked at her with a somewhat incredulous expression.

"Now, come, Robby, tell me where you got that money?"

"Why don't you ask your dickey bird?" was the ready reply of the bad boy.

SNAPSHOT ARTILLERY.

By BERTRAM LEBHAR.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 153 of NICK CARTER STORIES. Back numbers can always be obtained from your news dealer or the publishers.)

CHAPTER XVI.

A NIGHT'S WORK.

Patrolman John Hicks, of the Oldham police force, was a fairly vigilant guardian of the law—in the daytime. But when his turn came to do night duty, which happened regularly every second week, he always felt drowsy, no matter how much sleep he took by day to prepare himself for his nocturnal vigil.

"Which goes to show that night work ain't the right thing for a man," Mr. Hicks was in the habit of complaining to his intimate friend. "It's against nature. The daytime was made for man to work in, and the night for man to sleep in. Even the dumb beasts and the birds close their eyes at night. When you try to reverse this order of things, Nature rebels—and you can't blame her."

Being anxious to offend Nature as little as possible, Officer Hicks had cultivated the habit of going to sleep standing up. So proficient had he become in this difficult art that he could lean against a lamp-post and slumber as soundly as if he were in his own comfortable bed at home.

The night which Hawley had selected for his photographic exposé of police conditions in Oldham happened to be one of the nights on which Patrolman Hicks was on duty.

He had selected the most comfortable lamp-post on his beat, and was propped against it, enjoying a deep sleep, when a big, black touring car, containing three men, came along.

The automobile was moving almost noiselessly, but even if the man at the wheel had honked his horn as it drew near, it wouldn't have caused any discomfort to Officer Hicks. He was too sound a sleeper to be bothered by the ordinary sounds of street traffic.

In his somnolent moments, Mr. Hicks did not present a very picturesque appearance. Only a slender man can lean against a lamp-post and look graceful; and Officer Hicks was almost as fat as Chief of Police Hodgins. Moreover, like the latter, he had the habit of sleeping with his mouth partly open.

But in spite of its lack of picturesqueness, his appearance caused great delight to the three men in the big, black touring car.

That vehicle came to a stop a few feet away from the lamp-post, and one of the men leaned over the side of the tonneau, and pointed a camera toward the slumbering bluecoat.

Then there came a vivid flash of light, a dull, booming sound, and a chuckle of triumph from the man with the camera.

Possibly the dull, booming sound and the chuckle of the man would not have aroused Patrolman Hicks by themselves, but the vivid flash of light hitting him squarely on the eyelids brought him to his senses in an instant.

Springing to an erect position, he stared in ludicrous astonishment at the automobile in front of him.

He was about to step into the roadway and ask the three men what had happened, but before he could carry out his intention the automobile had started off at great speed.

"Oh, well," Officer Hicks muttered to himself, "I guess it was nothing serious. Probably a fuse blew out, or something of that sort. Them automobiles is queer things."

With this reflection, he once more settled himself comfortably against the lamp-post, and resumed his interrupted slumbers.

"That was a cinch!" said the Camera Chap to his two companions, as the touring car sped through the quiet street. "Didn't I tell you, Fred, that there wouldn't be much danger?"

"Well, we can't expect that they'll all be as easy as that one," Carroll replied. "Ye gods! Just imagine the lives and property of the people of Oldham being intrusted to the care of a lazy, good-for-nothing shirker like that! I hope you got a good picture of him, Frank. It certainly ought to make the taxpayers of Oldham sit up and take notice."

"At all events, it ought to make 'em buy *Bulletins*," the Camera Chap chuckled. "I'll bet you a new hat, Fred, that your paper's circulation will be more than doubled as a result of this crusade.

"But, say," he exclaimed, as the touring car swung around a corner, "aren't we on another cop's beat now? If so, hadn't we better slow down, and hunt for him?"

This remark was addressed to Parsons, the *Bulletin's* police reporter, who was running the car. Parsons had been "covering police" for some years, and knew the majority of the members of the force by name, and what beat they were supposed to patrol. This expert knowledge made him a valuable member of the expedition. As he was aware also of the habits and weaknesses of many of the bluecoats, he was able to lead the Camera Chap to those who were most likely to be caught shirking their duty.

The reporter glanced quickly up and down both sides of the street, and reduced the speed of the touring car.

"This is 'Red' Horgan's beat," he announced. "And I guess I can tell you where he is right now. Horgan is the most notorious shirker in the department, and when he's on night duty he generally spends most of the time in 'Dutch Louie's' place on Allendale Street. I have no doubt that you'll find him there now playing pinochle in the back room."

The Camera Chap's face lighted up at this informa-

tion. "Playing pinochle, eh?" he exclaimed eagerly. "That ought to make a bully snapshot. Is it possible for a stranger to get into this Dutch Louie's place at this hour?"

"Sure!" Parsons answered, with a laugh. "He runs his place wide open all night. Anybody can walk in and order a drink right at the bar, no matter what the hour. Dutch Louie is a politician, as well as a liquor dealer, and he doesn't have to worry about his joint being pulled for violation of the excise laws."

"Good!" exclaimed Hawley joyously. "I was afraid I might have difficulty in getting into the place. Is this Allendale Street we're on now?"

"No; it's the next corner. Louie's place is halfway down the block," the reporter informed him.

"Then I think it would be a good idea to stop the car right here," said the Camera Chap. "I hardly think it would be a wise plan to ride right up to the door. The sound of our motor might scare Officer Horgan into dropping his pinochle hand."

"No need to be afraid of that," declared Parsons, with a laugh. "It would take more than an automobile to faze Red Horgan. He's a son-in-law of one of the biggest politicians in the county, and has such a strong pull that I guess he wouldn't care if Chief Hodgins himself came into the back room of the café and caught him playing cards when he ought to be patrolling his beat. I've often heard him boast that there isn't a superior officer in the department that isn't afraid to call him down, no matter what he does—that if any of them dared to get gay with him, he'd mighty soon show them where they got off at."

"Must be a pleasant sort of chap," said Hawley, with an ironical smile. "It'll be a genuine pleasure to publish his picture, eh, Fred?"

"But surely you've no intention of going into Dutch Louie's place to get it?" Carroll protested anxiously. "That's out of the question."

The Camera Chap looked astonished. "Why out of the question? Didn't you just hear Parsons say that anybody can get into the place?"

"Oh, yes, I haven't any doubt that you could get in, all right; but if you were rash enough to try to take a flash-light picture inside I rather guess you'd have some difficulty in getting out. Dutch Louie's few patrons are a pretty tough bunch. They'd probably kick in a few of your ribs before Officer Horgan placed you under arrest for taking photographs without a license. Better pass this one up, old man, and look for something a trifle easier."

But Hawley had no intention of foregoing this opportunity to procure a snapshot of Mr. Red Horgan in the rôle of a pinochle player. He realized that there were difficulties in the way of his getting the picture, but he was determined to make the attempt.

"It'll be a gem!" he declared enthusiastically. "If I can get it and it turns out all right, Fred, just imagine what a hit it will make with the readers of the *Bulletin*. Stop the car, please, Parsons. Here we are at the corner. I'm going to get out."

Carroll clutched at his coat to restrain him, but the Camera Chap laughingly shook off his hold, and got out of the automobile.

"You fellows wait here for me," he said. "Keep the power turned on, Parsons, and have the car all ready to start as soon as I come out. It's possible that we may have to make a hurried get-away, in which case it would be inconvenient to have to wait until you cranked up."

He was stepping to the sidewalk, when Carroll called to him:

"Hold on, there! If you're such a stubborn idiot that you can't be dissuaded from doing this crazy thing, I'm going with you. Do you think I'm going to stay quietly in this car while you're inside that joint, being killed? I guess not! The chances are a hundred to one that there'll be a rough-house as soon as you fire the flash," he said. "I don't suppose that even with me to help you we'll stand much chance against that crowd; but, at all events, two'll be better than one."

"Three, you mean, Mr. Carroll," exclaimed Parsons. "If there's any fighting to be done, I'm in on it, too, of course. I guess nobody'll steal the machine while we're away."

The *Bulletin's* police reporter was such a frail-looking chap that Hawley could scarcely repress a smile at these words, although he greatly appreciated the spirit which prompted them.

"Much obliged to both of you," the Camera Chap said; "but, really, I prefer to go alone. I think I can easily convince you that it will be a much better plan for you fellows to wait here in the machine."

"I won't hear of any such arrangement," Carroll declared firmly. "If you go, I'm going, too; and if Parsons wants to come along, he's welcome. The more the merrier. You may have your faults, Frank, old man, but I like you too well to be willing to sit passively here while you're being beaten to a pulp around the corner."

"I'm not going to be beaten to a pulp," the Camera Chap protested, with a laugh. "I intend to use strategy. If I go alone, I feel confident I'll be able to get away with it; but if you fellows insist upon butting in, you'll surely queer me. I'm a stranger to that bunch at Dutch Louie's, but you fellows are not. Both of you would be recognized as soon as you entered the place, and I'd have no chance to take the picture."

Carroll had to admit that there was a lot in this argument, and, after a little more demurring, he grudgingly consented to let Hawley have his way in the matter.

"But I'm not going to stay here in the car," he declared. "I'm going to hang around outside that joint, and keep my ears wide open. As soon as I hear the sound of a rough-house I'm coming in, for I'll know then that, in spite of all your resourcefulness and ingenuity, strategy has failed."

"All right," assented Hawley, with a laugh. "If strategy fails, I'll be glad to have the help of those big fists of yours. But I feel confident there isn't going to be any violence."

CHAPTER XVII.

A BIT OF STRATEGY.

There was no mistaking Dutch Louie's place, for it was the only restaurant on the block; moreover, the name of the proprietor was emblazoned in white letters on a flaring red glass sign.

As Parsons had predicted, the place was wide open. Although it was nearly two a. m., and the State excise law forbids business of the kind after one o'clock, the two waiters were very busy serving drinks.

The Camera Chap walked through the front room, and entered the room beyond. He pretended to be under the influence of liquor—walked like a fellow who has all the sail he can carry. It had occurred to him that this pretense might help his game along, although he had not as yet hit upon any definite plan for the taking of the picture.

In a corner of this rear room several men were seated at a round table, playing cards. One of these players wore a blue coat with brass buttons, and his hair was the color of carrots. By these tokens, Hawley knew that he was in the presence of Patrolman Red Horgan.

The card players were not the only occupants of the room. A dozen men were scattered among the small round tables, sipping their beverages or gulping them down, and paying but scant attention to the pinochle game in progress in the corner.

They were, as Carroll had said, a rough-looking crowd. One had only to glance at their faces to realize that anybody who came into the place looking for trouble would not have to go out unsatisfied.

Hawley, spying an unoccupied table some yards away from the group of pinochle players, made his way toward it, still keeping up the pretense of being tipsy. He seated himself so that he faced the policeman and his cronies, and, summoning a waiter, ordered something. Nobody paid much attention to him. Patrolman Horgan's gaze happened to wander in his direction, but the glance was merely a cursory one. The policeman was too busy "melding a hundred aces" to have much interest in the harmless-looking, apparently very "tired" young man who had just come in.

In another corner of the room was an automatic piano which was operated on a nickel-in-the-slot basis. Somebody dropped a coin into this machine, and it started to thrum a lively waltz strain.

This music—or near music—appeared to have a peculiar effect upon the Camera Chap. Although the tune was a rousing one, it evidently served as a lullaby in his case, for his eyelids began to droop, and his head rolled from side to side in a ludicrous manner. When the waiter came with what he had ordered, he was sprawled across the table, apparently fast asleep.

The waiter shook him roughly by the shoulder. "Here, young feller," he growled, "here's your drink. Wake up! This ain't no lodging house. If you want to sleep, you'd better hire a room upstairs."

The Camera Chap roused himself as though by a great effort, and stared stupidly at the glass which had been set before him. As soon as the waiter had gone, he lapsed once more into slumber.

"That fellow over there seems to be dead to the world," remarked Patrolman Horgan, with a chuckle. "Must be worse than he looked when he came in. Whose deal is it now?"

Needless to say, Hawley was by no means as "dead to the world" as his appearance seemed to indicate. Seldom, in fact, had his brain been more active than it was at this minute. As he sprawled across the table, with his eyes closed, and his head resting on his outstretched arms, he was summoning all his ingenuity in an effort to solve the perplexing problem which confronted him.

"Everything is dead easy except the firing of the flash-light powder," he mused. "I can get a dandy focus from here without moving an inch, and, with my camera held beneath the table, Red Horgan wouldn't even suspect that his picture had been taken—if it weren't for that telltale flash. That's the great difficulty. How the deuce am I going to fire the flash and get away with it?"

And then an inspiration came to him, and he began to groan. Usually he was not in the habit of groaning when he had an inspiration, but he had a good reason for doing so now. It was part of the plan which had just suggested itself to his resourceful mind. So he proceeded to groan loud enough to be heard by the group of pinochle players in the corner.

The waiter, hearing these sounds of anguish, once more stepped up to him, and shook him roughly by the shoulder. "Hey, young fellor, brace up!" he growled. "What's the matter with you, anyway? Are you sick, or is it just an ordinary jag?"

Hawley sat up, and clapped both hands to his head, one to each temple. The waiter and the others whose attention had been attracted by his groans could see that his face was distorted as though with great pain.

"Oh, my poor head!" groaned the Camera Chap. "It feels as though it would split in two. For the love of Pete, friend, if there's any bromo seltzer in the house, bring me some in a hurry."

"Sure, we keep it," said the man. "Just keep quiet a minute, young feller, and I'll fix up a dose."

The Camera Chap was not surprised to hear that the drug was procurable in Dutch Louie's place, for he had noticed a sign on the wall as he came in, announcing that it was on sale.

"Never mind about fixing it up," he said to the waiter. "Just bring me the bottle, a glass, and some water. I'll do the mixing myself."

Patrolman Horgan beckoned to the waiter as the latter was going out to fill the order.

"What's the matter with that guy over there, Harry?" he inquired.

"Oh, nothin' serious; just a headache."

"Is that all?" said the patrolman, in a disgusted tone. "From the way he was groaning just now, I thought he was dyin'. Come on, fellers; it's my meld."

When the waiter returned with a tray containing a small blue bottle, an empty glass, and a second glass filled with water, Hawley had an unlighted cigar between his teeth, but no one seemed to think it odd for a sick man to indulge in tobacco.

The Camera Chap was not in the habit of smoking cigars, but he always carried a couple in his vest pocket, and he had reasons of his own for transferring this one from his pocket to his mouth.

He took the bottle of bromo seltzer, and emptied some of the white powder into the empty glass. Then he turned to the waiter.

"On second thought, I guess I'll mix it with vichy instead of plain water," he said; "I like it better that way."

The waiter shrugged his shoulders, and went out to get a siphon of vichy. As soon as he had gone, the Camera Chap became very busy, but unobtrusively so.

His left hand stole into the side pocket of his coat, and when it came out again the closed fist held a quantity of silvery powder. He poised this hand over the glass containing the bromo seltzer, and the silvery powder fell on top of the white powder.

Then his right hand went into his coat pocket, and

he stealthily drew out a small pocket camera, which he held beneath the table.

When he had done these things, he gazed anxiously around the room, apprehensive that his actions might have been observed; but, to his great relief, he found that nobody was paying any attention to him.

Then, as he saw the waiter approaching with the siphon of vichy in his hand, Hawley struck a match, held the flame for a moment to the cigar in his mouth, then threw the match away.

Apparently he was careless, for the match, still alight, instead of falling to the floor, dropped into the glass of bromo seltzer in front of him.

Instantly there was a blinding flash which momentarily illuminated the entire room, and a dull explosion. The siphon of seltzer fell from the startled bartender's hand; several men gave vent to shouts of alarm; chairs and tables went crashing to the floor.

Patrolman Horgan jumped excitedly to his feet, and advanced toward the Camera Chap, who still sat at the table, surrounded by a haze of smoke which was slowly lifting toward the ceiling.

"Great guns! What was that?" the policeman demanded.

Hawley, his face a picture of bewilderment, pointed to the bartender.

"That's what I'd like to know," he said indignantly. "What was it? Maybe this man can tell us. I asked for bromo seltzer."

"It was marked bromo seltzer on the bottle," the astonished waiter declared. "And I took it from the regular stock."

He turned to the Camera Chap with sudden suspicion. "But what did you throw that lighted match into it for, anyway, young feller? That was a queer thing to do."

"The match dropped in," Hawley explained. "Didn't you see that I was lighting my cigar? But this is the first time I've ever heard of bromo seltzer being an explosive. Mighty queer it should go off like that. It's a mercy somebody wasn't killed."

"Oh, I guess the stuff ain't dangerous," remarked Patrolman Horgan, glancing around the room. "Nobody is even hurted, so there's nothing to get excited about. Let this be a lesson to you, young feller, to be more careful in future where you throw lighted matches."

"I certainly shall," the Camera Chap assured him meekly.

"I thought at first it was somebody takin' one of them flash-light pictures," said Patrolman Horgan. "It looked something like the kind of light them camera people use."

Hawley nodded. "Yes, it did look a little like that, didn't it?" he agreed. "I, once saw a man take a flash-light picture, and, now that you speak of it, there was some resemblance."

A few minutes later Fred Carroll, pacing nervously up and down the sidewalk outside Dutch Louie's place, was astonished and much relieved to see the Camera Chap step out of the doorway, a smile on his face, and with no signs of having sustained bodily injuries.

"Thank goodness, you've come at last!" the proprietor of the *Bulletin* exclaimed. "I was just thinking of coming in for you. I heard the flash go off a few minutes ago, and things were so uncannily quiet afterward that I was beginning to be afraid they had killed you. What on earth happened?"

"I'll tell you all about it when we're in the car," chuckled Hawley, hurrying toward the corner where the automobile waited. "I don't think there's any danger now, but just the same we might as well get away from here as soon as possible. I don't believe in taking any unnecessary chances."

Parsons, who was seated at the wheel of the motor car, uttered an ejaculation of joy when he caught sight of the Camera Chap.

"You don't mean to say that you actually got the picture?" he exclaimed incredulously, as the latter climbed aboard.

Hawley grinned. "I got something," he said; "but I can't guarantee that the result will be good. I had to manipulate my camera with one hand, and I had to guess the focus. Under those conditions, the chances are against the negative turning out all right. But it was the best I could do under the circumstances."

"How on earth did you do it?" Carroll inquired. "I can't imagine how you got off so easily. Do you mean to say that bunch didn't jump on you when you set off the flash?"

"Not at all," replied the Camera Chap, with a laugh. "They were very nice about it. There wasn't any rough-house at all, Fred. The last I saw of those fellows they were making a scientific experiment."

"A scientific experiment?" Carroll repeated, with a puzzled frown.

"Exactly," Hawley chuckled. "They were all gathered around the waiter like students in a chemistry class. And what do you suppose that waiter was doing, Fred?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

"He had several bottles of bromo seltzer on the table before him, and he was uncorking each one, and dropping a lighted match into it to see if he couldn't make it go off like a flash-light powder."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A GOOD BAG.

"Whither next?" the Camera Chap inquired, after he had confided to his two companions in the big touring car the details of what had happened inside Dutch Louie's café.

"I know a cop who goes to sleep every night in a lumber yard on his beat," Parson announced.

"Lead us to him!" said Hawley eagerly. "That sounds like an easy one, eh, Fred?"

"I really think we've got enough already," Carroll replied anxiously. "After what you've just done, old man, I'm beginning to believe that you can get away with anything; but what's the use of running any more risk than is necessary? You've got two good snapshots, and that is quite enough to illustrate our story. Let's call it a night's work, Frank, and not tempt fate any more."

Hawley laughed at this suggestion. "Nothing doing," he said. "I shan't consider that we've done our duty until we have at least a round half dozen snapshots of delinquent cops in our collection. No use being a piker, Fred. Two pictures on the front page of the *Bulletin* would make a measly showing. Besides, as I said before, I am by no means confident that Red Horgan's picture will turn out well. If it's too poor a negative for reproduction, that would leave us with only one. Lead the way to the cop in the woodpile, Parsons. We cer-

tainly can't afford to pass him up. Is his beat far from here?"

"Yes; it's at the extreme northern end of the town," the police reporter replied.

"Don't you know any others we'll pass on the way there?" Hawley inquired. "We might as well take them in regular order. It's growing late, and we haven't any time to lose."

"Yes; there's Mike Harrington, whose beat is on Cedar Street," Parsons replied promptly. "He generally hangs out in Windmuller's Café when he's on night duty. His brother is employed there."

"Great stuff!" exclaimed the Camera Chap gleefully. "We'll pay our respects to Patrolman Harrington before we disturb the slumbers of our friends in the woodpile. Is he a pinochle player, too, Parsons?"

"I don't think so," the reporter answered, with a laugh. "You'll most likely catch him in the act of diminishing Windmuller's stock of goods. He'd have been 'broke' long ago for bad habits if it hadn't been for his pull. His father is a member of the city council and one of Mayor Henkle's most energetic political workers."

"Oldham certainly has some police department!" Hawley chuckled. "Please stop a short distance away from Windmuller's place, old man. It wouldn't do to drive right up to the door."

Carroll turned anxiously to the Camera Chap. "Do me a favor, Frank, and cut this one out," he pleaded. "There's no sense in taking such desperate chances. Windmuller's place is almost as tough a joint as Dutch Louie's. Let Harrington alone, and pass on to some easier ones."

"I guess this thing is going to be easy enough," Hawley said confidently. "I intend to work that bromo-seltzer trick over again. I don't see why it shouldn't succeed as well in Windmuller's place as in Dutch Louie's. In fact, I stand a much better chance of getting away with it this time, for I know beforehand just what I'm going to do, and can proceed with calm deliberation. Besides, practice makes perfect, you know."

Carroll shook his head deprecatingly; but he realized that argument was useless, and made no further attempt to dissuade his rash and impetuous friend.

Although the Camera Chap's adventures that night were eventful enough to be worth recording fully, limitations of space render it inexpedient to describe them all in detail here.

In the main, his experience inside Windmuller's place was similar to what had happened at Dutch Louie's, Once more he affected a bad headache, and called upon the waiter to bring him a dose of bromo seltzer; and when the white powder was placed before him, he made the same use of it as he had done in the former instance.

Greatly to the relief of his two companions, he emerged from the place unscathed, and laughingly assured him that he had succeeded in snapshotting Patrolman Harrington, and had reason to believe that the negative would be a fairly good one.

Compared with this exploit, the taking of a flash-light picture of the policeman who was slumbering in a lumber yard at the northern end of the town was not a difficult matter. Hawley succeeded in getting a first-class snapshot of this sleeping beauty, and although the bluecoat was awakened by the setting off of the flash-light powder, and, bellowing with rage, chased the Camera Chap through the piles of lumber, the latter managed to reach the automobile in time to make a safe get-away.

Although he now had four snapshots of delinquent policemen, and Carroll again pleaded that these were quite sufficient for their purpose, the Camera Chap was firm in his determination not to give up the hunt until the *Bulletin's* collection consisted of at least six negatives.

Parsons had reached his limit. He was unable to suggest where any more members of the force whom he knew to be chronic shirkers might be found that night; but even this fact could not discourage Hawley. He declared confidently that if they rode around town a bit, and kept their eyes open, they were likely to pick up a couple of random snapshots to complete their night's work.

So, while the citizens of Oldham slept peacefully on, in utter ignorance of this enterprising effort that was being made to reform conditions in their town—and incidentally to increase the circulation of the *Bulletin*—the big touring car traversed the highways and byways in search of more blue-coated victims of this relentless photographic crusade.

This search was not unproductive. As the Camera Chap and his friends rode through Main Street, they suddenly encountered the most sensational and the most shameful spectacle of the night—a man in the uniform of a captain of police so merry that he could scarcely stand.

"That's Captain Alf Callman—the worst grafter and the biggest bully of the department, barring Chief Hodgins," exclaimed Parsons excitedly, as he brought the car to a stop. "Don't fail to get a good picture of him, Mr. Hawley. This is a rare piece of luck. If ever there was a rascal who deserved to be held up to public scorn and ridicule, it's that brute there."

"Yes, Frank," said Carroll, a scowl upon his face, "we want his picture, by all means. A few weeks ago he beat up a crippled boy unmercifully for selling *Bulletins* outside police headquarters."

The Camera Chap's face grew grim. "And you mean to say you let him get away with that?" he exclaimed, in astonishment.

"I did all that I could," replied the proprietor of the *Bulletin*. "I preferred charges against him in court, and I've been roasting him on the front page of the paper every day since. But his pull enabled him to have the case thrown out of court, and the *Bulletin's* roasts don't seem to have worried him much. He's too thick-skinned to care what's said or printed about him.

"But, thick-skinned as he is," Carroll went on, "I'll bet he'll rave when he sees his picture on our front page, showing him in that condition. That'll hurt him more than anything else I can think of. So be sure to get a good snapshot of him, Frank; one that'll show the public just what a beast he is."

The taking of this flash-light picture was an easy matter, and there was no risk attached, for Captain Alf Callman was too happy to realize what was happening, and merely grinned fatuously when the flash went off. Nevertheless, Hawley had never in all his career as a camera man derived more satisfaction from the taking of a snapshot.

The last picture of the night was that of a policeman whom they discovered a few blocks farther on, fast asleep in a doorway. He was so dazed by the flash light that the Camera Chap had no difficulty in getting away.

Having added this trophy to his collection, Hawley turned to Carroll with a satisfied smile.

"Now, I guess we can go home," he said. "I think we've done a fairly good night's work."

"The best ever!" chuckled the proprietor of the *Bulletin*. "If these pictures of yours turn out all right, I've got an idea that they'll stir this old town as it's never been stirred before."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ENEMY'S MOVE.

Although the *Bulletin* was not a profusely illustrated newspaper, it maintained a photo-engraving plant of its own. Carroll had installed this department when he first acquired possession of the paper, and had brought a man named Neilson from New York to take charge of it.

It had been Carroll's original intention to go in extensively for half-tone illustrations, but his failure to make a financial success of the publication had necessitated a cutting down of expenses wherever possible, and now pictures were seldom used in the pages of the *Bulletin*.

When Carroll informed Neilson that he would have to dispense with his services, candidly telling him the reason, the engraver proposed that he be permitted to take in outside job work in lieu of salary.

This arrangement had turned out satisfactorily for both parties concerned. Neilson had managed to get enough outside work to make it worth his while to stay, and Carroll was glad to have him on the job, because, although he had practically given up illustrations, he occasionally found it necessary to use a cut in the pages of the *Bulletin*. These occasions were so rare, however, that great was Neilson's surprise when, on the day following Hawley's night crusade again the Oldham police, Carroll appeared in the photo-engraving department with a half dozen negatives in his hand.

"Here, Ole," the proprietor of the *Bulletin* said, with a smile, "I want these enlarged, and a two-column cut made from each. Make just as good a job of them as you can, and remember that they're for to-morrow morning's issue."

"All for to-morrow morning's issue?" exclaimed the engraver incredulously.

"Sure thing! And all for the front page, too." Carroll chuckled. "It's going to be the bulliest front page the *Bulletin* has ever had, Ole. Just take a close look at those negatives, old man, and I guess you'll understand why."

Neilson stared hard at the small oblongs of film. "They ban look like policemens," he said.

"They are policemen!" declared Carroll, with another chuckle.

"What you ban going to do," the engraver inquired, "get out a special cop's edition?"

"A sort of special cop's edition," replied Carroll, with a grin. "But, say, Ole," he added anxiously, "what do you think of these negatives from a photographic standpoint? Will they make pretty good cuts, do you think?"

Neilson inspected each one critically. "I can't tell very well, of course, Mr. Carroll, until I see the prints," he replied, at length. "They ban flash lights, I see; but they look like pretty clear negatives yoost the same. Who took them?"

"A friend of mine from New York."

"Did he develop them, too?" the photo-engraver inquired. "They ban a pretty good job for an amateur."

"Yes, he developed them himself," Carroll answered. "We were so anxious to see what results we had that we came back here at three o'clock this morning, and Hawley—my friend from New York, I mean—used your dark room. But, say, Ole," he exclaimed anxiously, pointing to one of the negatives, "how about this one? It isn't quite as clear as the others. Do you think you'll be able to get a fairly good cut out of it?"

Neilson once more inspected the negative designated. It was a snapshot of a group of men playing a game of cards. One of the men wore a police uniform.

"I guess I ban able make it all right," he said. "It isn't very strong, but I guess I ban able to touch up the print a bit, and get a good result yoost the same."

Neilson held up another of the negatives. "This ban best one of the lot," he announced. "I make extra-good cut of him."

The picture in question was the snapshot of a man in a police captain's uniform. A scowl came to Carroll's face as he gazed upon it.

"I'm glad to hear that, Ole," he said grimly. "I want an extra-good cut of him. And, by the way, make that one three columns wide instead of two. I'm going to us it in the center of the page."

Then Carroll went into the editorial rooms, and, seating himself at his desk, began to write rapidly. For two hours he was occupied with his task, and what he wrote seemed to afford him much satisfaction, for at frequent intervals the other occupants of the room heard him chuckle immoderately.

At length the long editorial was finished, and as he gathered the closely written pages together, he exhaled a deep breath.

"Hawley said that the pictures would be the main feature of the *Bulletin's* exposé," he muttered; "and, of course, he was right. No doubt about that. But at the same time I rather think this editorial of mine is going to make quite a hit, too."

Hawley heartily indorsed this opinion when, a few minutes later, he dropped into the *Bulletin's* office, and Carroll showed him what he had written.

"It's great stuff!" the Camera Chap exclaimed enthusiastically. "Simply immense! I never had any idea that you could sling English as well as that, Fred."

Carroll flushed with pleasure at his warm praise. "I guess it's because I feel so strongly on the subject," he said simply. "A fellow can write so much better, you know, if he really feels what he writes.

"People who buy the *Bulletin* to-morrow morning are certainly going to get their money's worth," Hawley chuckled. "That editorial alone will be well worth the price of the paper. Your readers ought to paste it in their scrapbooks as a model of satire."

"Cut out the joshing, old man," protested Carroll. "If the readers of the *Bulletin* paste anything in their scrapbooks, it will be those wonderful snapshots of yours. They're going to create a big sensation, Frank."

The Camera Chap grinned. "Yes, the snapshots and your editorial combined certainly ought to stir things up. Don't forget that I've bet you a new hat that your circulation figures will be more than doubled to-morrow, Fred."

"I'll be quite satisfied to lose the hat," Carroll chuckled. "And just to show you that I don't expect to win the bet, let me tell you that I've already given orders to my pressroom to print twice the usual number of papers to-morrow."

"I guess you're quite safe in doing so," said the Camera Chap earnestly. "I don't think you'll have many copies left on your hands. But how are the pictures getting along, Fred? Have they been made into cuts yet?"

"Neilson is working on them now," Carroll answered. "Come on up, and we'll see how he's progressing."

Neilson was working on an outside job—a half-tone cut for the letterhead of a local tailor—when they entered his laboratory. Observing this, Carroll was somewhat annoyed. He had asked Neilson to rush the cuts through, and, while he realized that it was the outside work which paid the expenses of the plant, he felt aggrieved that the tailor's half tone should be given first attention.

"How about that work I gave you?" he inquired sharply. "Started on it yet, Ole?"

The engraver looked at him in astonishment. "How can I start on it until you give me back them negatives?" he exclaimed. "I ban yoost coming down to ask you for them."

"Give you back the negatives!" the proprietor of the *Bulletin* repeated, with a puzzled frown. "What on earth are you talking about?"

"I ban talking about those policemen's negatives you want made into cuts for to-morrow's paper, of course," replied Neilson, a trifle nettled. "How can I make the cuts until I get the pictures?"

"But you have the pictures," Carroll protested. "Didn't I give them to you?"

"Sure you gave them to me once. But you ban take them back again, didn't you?" replied the man indignantly.

"I took them back?"

"Sure! At least, you sent the boy for them—which is yoost the same, of course."

"The boy?" Carroll was beginning to grow uneasy. "What boy?"

"That boy Miggsy, of course," Neilson replied, now thoroughly out of temper. "What kind of a yoke you ban try to play with me, Mr. Carrol? I ban serious feller, and don't like foolin'. Didn't you send that Miggsy up here half an hour ago to say would I please let you have them negatives back right away?"

Carroll's face suddenly turned pale. "I certainly did not!" he exclaimed excitedly. "I sent no such message. Do you mean to say that Miggsy told you that I sent him?"

"He sure did. He said you needed the pictures to show to somebody, and must have them right away. I ban yust starting to work on them when he came up, but I gave them to him."

With an exclamation of alarm, Carroll hurried downstairs to the editorial rooms to interview the office boy. The youngster was not in sight.

"Seen anything of Miggsy?" he inquired anxiously of one of the reporters, whose desk was near the door.

"Not lately. The last time I saw him, Mr. Carroll, was half an hour ago, when he went out to do that errand for you."

"An errand for me?"

"Yes, that's what he said. He was going out just as I came in, and he seemed to be in a great hurry. I stopped him on the stairway, and jokingly asked him what all the rush was about. He begged me not to delay him, as you had just sent him out on an errand of great importance which had to be attended to immediately.

Carroll turned to Hawley, who had followed him downstairs. They exchanged glances of consternation.

"What do you make of it?" the proprietor of the *Bulletin* said hoarsely.

The Camera Chap smiled grimly. "It looks very much as if our young friend Miggsy had gone over to the enemy," he said.

"Yes, I'm afraid so," growled Carroll. "I can't imagine any other reason for his actions. The little ingrate! I've been pretty good to that kid. I never thought that he'd do me a trick of this sort."

He paced the floor nervously, his big fists clenched. "Great grief!" he muttered. "Can it really be possible that all our trouble has been for nothing—that we're not going to publish those wonderful snapshots, after all?"

Hawley patted his shoulder soothingly. It was in forlorn situations of this sort that the Camera Chap's sunny disposition showed up to the best advantage.

"Cheer up, old scout!" he said Carroll. "After all, there's that corking editorial of yours. Even without the pictures, it'll make quite a hit in to-morrow's front page."

"No, it won't," groaned Carroll. "That editorial won't go on to-morrow's front page. I might as well tear it up. Don't you see that I wouldn't dare publish it without the pictures? Those fellows would sue me for libel. They'd swear that my statements were false, and, without the photographic evidence, I couldn't prove that they weren't."

"I guess you're right there," said the Camera Chap thoughtfully. "It's too bad that that fine piece of writing should go to waste. Well, better luck next time, I—— Where are you going, Fred?" For Carroll, muttering something under his breath, had stepped hastily toward the door.

"I'm going down to the pressroom to cancel that order for extra papers," the proprietor of the *Bulletin* explained gloomily.

TO BE CONTINUED.

WORSE AND WORSE.

There was a notice in the barber's shop window reading "Boots Blacked Inside." A pedestrian halted and read and reread the notice, and then opened the door and said:

"That ought to be shoes. Not one man in fifty wears boots in the summer."

The barber didn't say anything, but, after due reflection, concluded that the man was right, and so changed the notice to read: "Shoes Blacked Inside." He had scarcely put it up when the same man came along again and opened the door to say:

"No one wants the inside of his shoes blacked. We pay to have the shine on the outside."

The barber puzzled over it for a while, and realized that the man was right again, and next day the notice was replaced by one reading:

"The outside of shoes blacked inside."

"That's perfectly correct," said the fault finder, as he came along in the afternoon. "Never give yourself away on the English language."

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Dies Preaching on Death.

"Prepare to live and you will be prepared to die," said the Reverend R. G. Collison, addressing a large congregation in the tabernacle of the Oregon Christian Church Convention, at Turner, Ore. As he spoke he sank to the floor of the pulpit and died within a few seconds. Death was caused by apoplexy.

Dyestuff Makers Cheerful.

Aniline dye manufacturers in this country are making a tremendous, and, they believe, an encouraging effort to supply the want of dyes, so greatly needed since the cessation of German exportation of that product.

Some idea of the way in which the domestic industry has been called upon to meet the demand of the textile mills was given by one of the largest American concerns in the dye business, who said that his company has daily to reject orders for some thirty to eighty thousand pounds of dyes because of their inability to manufacture them fast enough.

As an evidence of the satisfactory manner in which the American manufacturers have rallied to meet the situation, he asserted that his company was manufacturing four times as much dyestuffs this year as in any year previous.

Although it has been less than a year since the dyestuff and chemical industries were thrown into confusion by the war, a readjustment has been partly accomplished, which has enabled mill operators to go ahead with the manufacture of textiles.

From the way the American output has increased it would be safe to say that inside of the next eighteen months manufacturers here will be able to supply some $10,000,000 worth annually of dyestuffs to a home market which could use $30,000,000 worth. Now that the American output is expanding, our manufacturers feel confident that the trade lost by Germany will not be regained.

This Aged Hen is a Real Coop Marvel.

"Eusapia Palladino," the oldest hen in the town of Killingly, Conn., and perhaps in the entire world, is to have a birthday party on the occasion of her twenty-seventh birthday, which will come in a few days. All the old hens in Killingly are looking forward to the event, and it is probable that a few young chickens will be asked, just to give the party a metropolitan flavor.

Eusapia, though of Spanish origin, lays her eggs in English and began the work when but five months old. Her first egg, which her owner, Mr. James Blanchard still has, was laid in November, 1888, and since then she has laid an average of 144 a year. She has just laid another egg as this story is being written, and only the greatest haste can prevent her laying another before it is completed. She just lays around all day, as might be expected at her great age. Unlike the Madagascar Bingle Hen, which lays square eggs with a monogram, Eusapia lays but one egg at a time.

Eusapia, it will be readily reckoned, was hatched from a black Spanish egg ten years before the Spanish-American War, when shells burst less frequently. She has seen a very active life, and greatly deplores the dissipation, irregular hours, and loss of sleep incident to the poultry shows which have become popular of late years. She does not smoke, has never on any occasion partaken of alcoholic liquors, and can now read without glasses if she cared to.

Mr. Blanchard has had several disputes lately with persons who, having dined at the Killingly Commercial Inn, questioned that Eusapia was the oldest chicken in the world.

Of late years Eusapia has been given to fits of depression, and the admittance of eggs as parcel-post mail left her on the verge of a nervous breakdown for days.

A thousand chicks have been hatched by Eusapia in her long and useful life. She has always shown a great interest in them, has personally supervised their early education, and has invariably responded, even in late years, to their slightest cluck.

Laborers Kill Two-hundred-pound Shark.

A shark, measuring seven and a half feet long and weighing about two hundred pounds, was killed in Weir Creek, an inlet of Long Island Sound, by David McGowan, a sewer inspector; A. L. Hartman and several Italian laborers, all armed with crowbars. The fight lasted more than a half an hour.

Child Plays With Rattler.

Having a monster rattlesnake as a temporary playmate without being struck by the deadly fangs of the reptile and killed was the unusual experience of the little child of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Hunt, of Scenic, S. D., Mr. Hunt being the depot agent of the Milwaukee Railway Company.

The mother discovered the little girl playing with the rattlesnake in the yard around the Hunt home. The snake appeared to like the companionship of the little girl and made no effort to coil and strike. The mother managed to drag the child from within reach of the snake without arousing the anger of the reptile. The little girl strongly objected to being separated from her strange playmate. After the girl had been removed to a place of safety, the reptile was killed.

A Municipal Bat Roost.

The only municipal bat roost in the world was recently erected at San Antonio, Texas, and is expected to have an important part in the city fight against malaria and other diseases. The bat has been discovered by Doctor C. A. Campbell, of San Antonio, to be one of the greatest enemies of the mosquito, which is largely responsible for the spread of malarial and similar germs. For this reason San Antonio is not only protecting the bat by law, but has entered into the proposition of its cultivation.

Doctor Campbell has demonstrated that one bat will consume as many as 250 mosquitoes in one night. He

has estimated that the amount of guano that could be collected from a single bat roost, capable of accommodating 250,000 bats, in a season of nine months, would equal about forty tons—and guano, the highest of all fertilizers, is worth forty dollars a ton. It is Doctor Campbell's idea that the bat roost is a natural hygienic measure, which should be adopted by governments, municipalities, or corporations controlling large bodies of land, and who are financially able to erect enough of the roosts to protect their tenants. The roosts, however, must be constructed from a scientific standpoint, so that they will not only attract bats, but cause them to remain there permanently.

Knife Melted by Lightning.

Francis Wagoner, a farmer of Upper Mount Bethel, near Bangor, Pa., struck by a bolt of lightning during a terrific storm that passed over that section lives to tell his story, but he will be marked for life.

Wagoner was sitting in the kitchen reading a paper when the bolt of lightning struck a section of metal spouting, entered the bathroom window, and went into the kitchen by way of the stovepipe.

From the stove the lightning hit Wagoner on the right leg, then crossed diagonally to his left shoulder. On the way it came in contact with a knife in his pocket, which was partly melted by the bolt. The lightning left reddish streaks over his body, and he was badly stunned.

Girl Poses as Boy Five Years.

After five years of roaming about this country and Europe posing as a boy, Edna Puffer, eighteen years old, arrested in the New Haven, Conn., railroad yards just as she was about to hop on a freight train for New York, was thrust back into petticoats as soon as they could be procured. She said she had traveled to Europe on board a cattle ship.

Convinced that Franklin Shaw, the sailor who was arrested in her company, was unaware of his companion's sex, although he had been with her for nearly three months, Judge Booth, in the city court, continued both cases.

Government's Movie Shows.

The department of agriculture keeps up a special motion-picture factory at which it makes the films it uses in promoting scientific farming. The department heads use the films to illustrate lectures, and the field force shows them at country schoolhouses and churches, where they have invariably attracted large and interested audiences. Even before the factory was set up, various bureaus of the department made use of films in educating the public. Thus, the bureau of animal industry has a special film to show Southern farmers how to make and use the dipping vats that would free their herds of ticks. It also showed films that illustrated the correct ways of handling meat, breeding cattle, and raising poultry.

The good-roads division and the forest service have made a similar effective use of motion pictures.

Rains Alligators in Iowa.

Is there really something to the belief that reptiles are sometimes rained down from heaven or has somebody lost two perfectly good alligators in the vicinity of West Liberty, Iowa? That is a question West Liberty would like to have solved.

Two perfectly sane, entirely responsible, utterly truthful and eminently respectable families report the finding of alligators in their front yards, said front yards being separated only by the width of the passing road.

On the farm of David Nauman an alligator was found prowling about the garden and was destroyed by an excited member of the Nauman family.

On the place of Charles Carter, across the road, Mr. Carter in person made the discovery, captured the alligator, and now has it on exhibition.

West Liberty people say it has rained hard enough of late to account for 'most anything, but, beyond accrediting the advent of the alligators to the sky, are at a loss to advance an acceptable theory.

Interesting New Inventions.

A doorknob connected with an electric lamp that may be switched on by pressing a button has been patented by a New York inventor. The invention is expected to help materially in the sometimes difficult process of finding the keyhole after dark. The doorknob is illuminated. The same principle is applied to the doors and dials of safes.

A cattle guard invented by an Arkansas man, a section foreman, has been approved by railroads. It is made in three sections, so that it can be removed for track surfacing. The guard consists of rollers, which are made in a frame resting on top of the ties.

A Philadelphia University professor has invented a dust-proof, fire-resisting glass case for museum specimens.

Wireless apparatus that weighs but eight pounds, yet will transmit messages twenty-one miles and has received signals more than three hundred miles, has been invented by a New Jersey man.

A sand box for automobiles, like the familiar device on locomotives, to distribute sand under their tires to prevent skidding, has been patented by a Massachusetts inventor.

What is believed to be the largest conveyer belt in the world, 893 feet long by thirty-six inches wide, has been made for an Ohio stone quarry.

To keep the base lines of ball grounds dry when it rains, a Pennsylvanian has patented a canvas cover, easily rolled for removal.

Sue for Wages Earned Back in Slavery Days.

After more than a half century has passed since the freeing of the slaves, a suit was filed a few days ago in the supreme court of the District of Columbia to gain compensation for work performed by them during the years 1859 to 1868.

The suit was filed by H. N. Johnson, of Louisiana; Rebecca Bowers, of Texas; C. B. Williams, of Mississippi, and Mamie Thompson, of Tennessee, against William M. McAdoo in his official capacity as secretary of the treasury.

The plaintiffs claim to be descendants of slaves who worked in cotton fields of the Southern States, and they hold that they are entitled to money their ancestors earned and which is now in the treasury, listed under the title of "internal revenue tax on raw cotton."

This money, the complaint says, amounts to $68,072,-

388.99, acquired from the seizure of cotton gathered by plaintiffs' ancestors. The plaintiffs contend it should be paid to the descendants of those by whose labor the cotton-yielding revenue was produced.

The bill asks that the court appoint an examiner to collect evidence; that Secretary McAdoo be ordered to disclose the amount and source of money now in the treasury under the listing of "Internal revenue tax on raw cotton," and that he be ordered to state any reasons he may believe the plaintiffs are not entitled to the money.

The petition was filed by a Washington attorney representing Cornelius J. Jones, of Muskogee, Okla. Jones, who is said to have prepared the bill of complaint, is a negro lawyer.

Dies Close to Time He Set.

Peter White, an aged negro residing near Washington, N. C., died at twelve-thirty p. m., just twenty minutes later than the hour he had appointed. In April, White told friends that he would "give up the ghost" at the stroke of twelve.

About this time Jerry Langley, colored, was giving the police of Washington trouble. Langley had set the hour for his demise. He postponed it several times, each time disappointing a great crowd of blacks gathered for the dramatic exit of Langley. Finally, when he said the thing was final, the crowd blocked the street and the police would not wait for Jerry to die. They hustled him off to the county home. He is still living.

White, the authorities say, may have been prompted by Langley's example. He had visions of himself being trolleyed aloft in a golden chariot. Old age claimed him, doctors say.

Year's Pickles in the United States.

If all the pickles manufactured in the United States were equally devided among the inhabitants, every man, woman, and child would receive about twenty-four, according to the statement of Frank A. Brown, secretary and treasurer of the National Pickle Packers' Association, which held a business meeting at the Palmer House, Chicago.

"There are three million bushels of pickles raised in this country every year," he said, "and as there are about eight hundred pickles to a bushel, every person in the United States would get about twenty-four.

"People often ask: 'What good are pickles?' They are one of the most beneficial foods in the world, because there is just enough acid in them to properly care for the teeth, and indirectly this improves the health of the whole body."

New Electric Fly Swatter.

Herschell Colyar, of Visalia, Cal., is the inventor of a new fly killer that is guaranteed to get the best of them. The "killer" is a small apparatus composed of a number of wires. It can be hung any place and connected with the "juice," and when Mr. Fly touches any of said wires, he quickly falls dead.

A barber shop is fitted up with one of them, and it seems to be doing remarkable work.

It is said that some of the largest companies in the country have been working on such an apparatus for years, and finally had declared that such an outfit could not be made. Colyar has been working on his invention for about three years.

Head Clerk's Ear Is His Own Cash Register.

Women carry their loose change in their stockings, children put their money in their mouths, but Norris Bethel, head clerk for Florin Brother, of Fall River Mills, Cal., makes a cash register of his ears.

When he is selling goods and is in a hurry for a nickel or a dime to make change, he reaches to one ear or the other and finds the needed coin.

Or, if he received a small coin, and is at some distance from the cash register, he puts it into one of his ears until he has use for it or until he is close to the cash register and can relieve himself.

The system is considered unique, and it is Bethel's exclusively.

Apple-sizing Machine Invented in Oregon.

Asa B. and Frank W. Cutler, brothers, who operate one of the largest fruit ranches in Oregon, have invented and are completing the construction of an apple-sizing machine that works by means of weighing mechanisms. The two young men, graduates in the mechanical-engineering department of the University of Illinois, have been experimenting for several years with grading and sizing machines, and during the past two years have put to practical test graders that made the choice of apples according to the dimensions of the fruit.

"However," says Frank W. Cutler, "this method proved inaccurate, on account of the different shapes of the fruit. The new method will insure a standard pack, something that has been long sought by fruit districts."

The new grader is so accurate that it will grade into different bins apples, the weights of which differ only a tenth of an ounce. The local inventors have improved on the receiving bins that are placed at the side of the graders. Their new bin tips itself toward the packer as it fills automatically, the end resting nearest the packer resting on springs.

How to Fireproof Clothes.

At the safety exposition held in New York recently, Doctor Charles Frederick Pabst demonstrated how to make fireproof clothing. He poured from one pound to a gallon of cold water in a solution of ammonium phosphate. Then he took an eight-inch strip of ordinary cotton gauze and dipped it in the ammonium-phosphate solution. He dried it with an electric fan and held it in a flame for thirty seconds, but it did not burn. He took another strip of gauze that had not been treated with the solution, and, on igniting it, it burned in four seconds. He advised that the whole family washing should be made fireproof. The expense of an average-size family would be about fifteen cents a week.

His Machine Ties Bundles.

About eight years ago a father and his son began to work upon an idea that had occurred to the elder man during his working hours in the mailing division of the Chicago post office. A short time ago the result of their joint effort was put in operation. It is a package-tying machine that does the work of many men. So

convenient is the little contrivance that it has been introduced into the New York post office, too, and the government now is negotiating with the inventors for more of their machines.

The inventors are Romanzo N. Bunn and his son, Benjamin H. Bunn. For years the men have been tying up bundles of outgoing letters for transportation to the trains. Fast as the men worked, it always seemed Bunn thought it should be done faster. His son worked on the mechanical side of the problem. Together father and son toiled in a homemade shop at their home. The little portable "tyer" was what came out of the basement workshop.

The machine is about three feet high and about a foot square. It begins operation after the mail has been distributed in the racks by hand ready for tying to go to the trains. Then the machine is rolled along the line of pigeonholes and fed, by hand, by its retainer. Packs of letters, four inches thick, are placed into position, the machine is set in motion, and then—click, click, clop! That's the way it sounds. The first two clicks indicate the tying of the packet of letters, sidewise and then lengthwise, and the "clop" the dropping of the bundle into a waiting basket.

Where the best men used to tie five or six packets in a minute, the machine now ties thirty—and it has not tried for a record yet!

Flesh From Body Saves Eye.

The sight of Doctor E. Lerendinger, a professor of Hood College, Frederick, Md., has been restored as the result of an unusual surgical operation. Flesh was removed from the professor's abdomen and placed in a cavity above one of his eyes, which had been caused by an accident. The operation was performed several weeks ago, but was not made public until success was assured.

Tallest Couple are Wedded.

The tallest couple in Pennsylvania were united in marriage a few days ago in Lewistown. The bridegroom, George Schaffer, who stands six feet seven inches in his stockings, achieved quite a reputation when he was a member of the Allentown police as the tallest cop. The bride is Mrs. Angie Kern, six feet two inches tall. Both parties are about forty years of age.

Mrs. Schaffer is a prospective heiress if she can break the will of the late Charles Losch, who left about $150,000 to be divided among relatives. She produced a letter purporting to have been signed by Losch, saying that if she would take care of him in his declining years he would leave her his homestead in Allentown, valued at $12,000. Schaffer says he often heard Losch say he would leave Mrs. Kern the homestead.

The newlyweds have purchased a farm, and whatever the outcome of the will contest, it will not affect their happiness. The bride says she fell in love with her new husband because she detested walking around with a man shorter than herself.

This Modest Inventor Would Stop World War.

"I can make the United States the strongest nation in the world. I can end the European struggle in a short time. I can make the smallest nation most powerful."

This is the assertion of John Vogelzangs, of Menominee, Mich., an inventor, who claims to have a method of extracting electricity from the air so that air craft might be manned with powerful guns and not be forced to land until they want to.

"I can sweep the seas clear of vessels. I can kill armies and level cities," claimed the inventor, who in the same breath asserted he favored universal peace, but that the world was not ready for it.

He says Secretary Daniels' plan for an advisory board is good.

He refused to give out much information about his new device. He said he lacked money to carry on the work, and displayed a letter from Mr. Daniels, written before the war broke out, saying this nation was not ready to take up his ideas.

Vogelzangs has a reputation for being an inventor of ability. He made a street cleaner, which he refused to sell for $10,000. He also claims he will revolutionize the berry business with a new picker.

Walks on 113th Birthday.

Mrs. Edna G. Goldman, of Glamorgan, Va., celebrated her 113th birthday by walking ten miles to the home of her son, Henry Goldman, at Pound, Va.

Mrs. Goldman was born in Appomattox County, Va., in 1802. Despite her age, she cultivates a small patch of land in corn and beans each year. This year she is "farming" about two acres.

Flivver is Not Amphibious.

Edward Kirby, of Newton, N. J., erred in believing a flivver amphibious. It is alleged that he stole the automobile at the Grand Hotel, Golden Springs, and, when closely pursued by other automobiles, he ran the flivver into the Delaware River, seeking to reach Pike County shore.

The flivver floated several minutes and made quite a little progress in the current, but when the body filled, she went down at the bow and soon plunged to the bottom.

Kirby swam out and made his way across the river. He disappeared into the woods there, and a posse under Sheriff Applegate is seeking him.

Song Tells of Old Man Who Had a Wooden Leg.

John Strain, of Greenwich, Conn., who lost his leg three years ago and his temper recently, has announced that he intends to obtain a rubber artificial limb. His statement was made to-day through a window of the county jail, from which he will watch the dying sun precede each of the next thirty twilights.

The reason Mr. Strain intends to obtain the new artificial limb described it that his wife, a muscular woman, who has been getting plenty of exercise since John ceased to work eight years ago, has been and is in the habit of bounding his artificial limb off his forehead when a domestic storm brews. The present limb is of wood, and, for various reasons, is unsatisfactory to Mr. Strain and his brow.

Over the condition of the weather a quarrel started in the Strain home. Mr. Strain declared he felt that a gale was coming from the northeast, inasmuch as his left leg—not the wooden one—pained slightly. Mrs. Strain, with that rare spirit of raillery which characterizes

a woman who supports four children, told John the weather could scarcely affect a man who sat in the house smoking all the time. It was then that John, according to the testimony of his wife in police court, threw eight volumes of Dumas, apparently bound in zinc. His aim was true.

Mrs. Strain then took John's artificial limb and hung it just west of where he parts his hair. Her judgment of distance was perfect—it generally is. She then cried for help.

When help arrived, John had hopped on one foot over the State border, into New York. A sheriff with a rich baritone voice explained to him that hopping about New York State with no hat and only an undershirt over his shoulders would mean but little in his life. John thought deeply, hopped over into Connecticut again, and was sentenced to thirty days in jail by Judge James R. Meade.

Machine That Remembers.

A machine which will remember the date and hour of an appointment made several weeks previous is one of the latest efficiency devices to be placed on the market. A roll of paper strip passes over a flat surface where the appointment is indicated, and a punch mark made in the margin. When that time occurs, a gong is sounded and a reference to the strip will give the information as to what appointment is to be kept.

Fifty Dollars Gone, Flivver May Survive.

Probably the maddest man in and about Montgomery County, New York State, just at present is Reuben Hyney, who keeps a shoe store on the main street of Fonda, and who, as a side line, rents his automobile to any one who can fit in it. Mr. Hyney has no more temper than any other normal man who lives in Montgomery County, but the shoe business has run over at the heel a bit recently, and the other afternoon something happened which increased Mr. Hyney's height four inches.

Hyney was adjusting a spring-heeled shoe to a broad foot at about a moment after two o'clock, when the telephone rang sharply. He dropped his client's foot onto his own and limped to the booth. A man with an educated voice, as Mr. Hyney describes it, was asking if he might hire an automobile for the afternoon. He said he was a school inspector and was as busy as a one-eyed mouse in a cheese factory. He would come running if the buzz wagon was not busy. It was not.

Hardly had the satisfied customer walked from the store when a bearded stranger, wearing a slouch hat, stopped at the door, looked up and down the street craftily, and entered.

"Wait there," said the shoe merchant, pointing to the central design on a piece of linoleum. "I will oil the machine and call my daughter."

The stranger, laughing up his sleeve, through his vest and along his hatband, reached into the cash register and took fifty dollars. Then he sat down and waited until Miss Hyney came to watch the store. By this time it was hardly worth it.

An hour later the mysterious stranger told the owner of the machine to stop in front of a building in Fort Plain. He went upstairs.

Three hours later Hyney decided the stranger had given him the metropolitan fare-thee-well. He entered the building and found nothing but the janitor and a flock of rent signs.

Two hours later he was back in Fonda, telling his daughter about the "cuss" who tore the soul out of a dandy four-hundred-dollar touring car and didn't pay for it. Then his daughter asked him if he had taken fifty dollars from the cash register.

Mr. Hyney is in bed. But what's the use?—he can't sleep.

Capture Odd Pair of Mice.

A most remarkable freak of nature is a white mouse and a black one captured in a bureau drawer by John Elias, who lives in Atchison, Kan. The white mouse hasn't a black spot on it and has black eyes. The black mouse has fur as black as the ace of spades, and its eyes are brown.

Local zoölogists are unable to account for the strange markings of the mice. They are very vicious and never miss a chance to attempt to bite members of the Elias family while being fed.

Billy Goat Is Boss of Town.

A billy goat tied up traffic in Kokomo, Ind., as effectively as the street-car strike did in Chicago. The goat broke away from a colored man who was leading it at the transfer corner.

The conductors of two cars standing there were on the sidewalk at the time. They started for their cars and the goat started for them. The men "beat it" for a candy store and won.

The goat then turned his attention to several pedestrians and soon made a scatterment. About this time Patrolmen Elkins and Webb came along.

Webb lived on a farm and knew the habits of the goat. He kept in the rear. Elkins bravely went forward to capture the goat. He managed to seize the animal by the head and tried to go with him to the station. Every time he pulled, the goat started to butt him. He held on for several minutes, afraid to let go, until the owner of the goat relieved him.

Aged Couple Joined at Last.

George W. Hayden, a retired farmer of Big Laurel, Va., and Larestia Fulton, of Lipps, were married at the home of the bride's son, Henry Fulton, a few days ago. The bridegroom was some few days past ninety years of age when the knot was tied and the bride was lacking a few days of being eighty-seven.

About seventy years ago Hayden and Miss Helt—the bride's maiden name—were engaged, but quarreled, and both married other parties and reared large families. Hayden's wife died eighteen years ago and Mrs. Fulton was left a widow three years ago.

"Well Broken to Hard Work."

Although many bones in his body have been broken as a result of various accidents during his life, W. M. Morgan, who lives near Lancaster, Kan., finds little cause for complaint for the treatment he has had at the hands of "cruel fate."

At various times he has had both shoulders fractured, a number of ribs cracked, a thumb broken, both legs broken, and his right foot has almost every bone in it

broken. Despite all these handicaps, he works every day at hard labor and has little use for the fellow who thinks hard luck has given him a jolt.

Snake Swallows China Egg.

Blacksnakes down Gales Ferry way cannot tell china nest eggs for hen's eggs, according to a story related by Mr. and Mrs. R. B. de Bussy, of Mount Vernon, N. Y. The De Bussys were recent guests of Miss Caroline Freeman at the Bouwerie, Gales Ferry. Miss Freeman's guests at that time included Professor Heuser, instructor in German at Columbia University, and his family.

Professor Heuser's daughter, six years old, returning from the poultry house at Bouwerie, reported no eggs, but said a big snake was in a hen's nest. A manservant, using an ax, killed the five-foot snake.

Miss Freeman then discovered that the china nest egg was missing from the nest. The search led to the interior of the snake, where the missing china nest egg was recovered.

Lightning's Queer Freak.

Lightning apparently photographed a perfect likeness of a tree, branches, twigs, and leaves, in minutest detail, on the breast of Edwin Liesman, who was instantly killed in the Magnolia clubhouse on Mount Penn, near Reading, Pa., in a violent electrical storm.

Liesman's mother, Mrs. Bernard Liesman, and a friend, Harry Opperman, were badly shocked, but will recover.

Liesman was sitting at a window next to a telephone. The bolt followed the telephone wire. The tree outside the window was almost exactly reproduced on Liesman's body. The tragedy occurred during four brilliant flashes in swift succession, putting out all the lights in the cottage. Medical men and photographers were puzzled by the strange features wrought on the dead man.

Sounds Like a Fish Story.

A flock of geese were swimming in White River, near Augusta, Ark., and a splash attracted the attention of several men and boys who were near by. A large blue channel catfish came up and grabbed a goose, taking the fowl under with him.

People watched for some time, but the goose never came up. This may sound like a fish story, but nevertheless it is true.

Ghostly Figure That is an Awful Shrieker.

A ghost, or some other creature with a voice like an armload of siren whistles, has frightened the residents of Somerville, N. J., to the point where it is no longer a joke, and they want to get to sleep. The disorder, frightful beyond words, ghastly, ghostly, and hair elevating, has been going on for a week, and the whole town is determined that something is to be done about it.

Thomas Hagen, night roundhouse watchman, was the first one to hear the shrieks. He was going round and round the roundhouse when the most frightful bellow imaginable rent the air. Mr. Hagen, who comes of a warm-blooded race, was so startled that his blood ran cold. It could barely run, even.

Right across the railroad tracks from the roundhouse is the cemetery, and Mr. Hagen, after recalling this, took a little jaunt up the road that restored his circulation to normal. He notified the police force, who were sitting up late, reading, and he became indignant when the department took a cigar out of its mouth and laughed at him.

Every night since then the terrible noise has been repeated, and persons who have passed the roundhouse have seen a strange figure flitting about among the bushes and trees which border the railroad tracks at that point. Some of them even describe the flitter, which is going some, considering the speed with which they invariably leave the neighborhood.

For the last two nights every one in the village has been shuddering in unison, and the vibration can be felt as far as Philadelphia. Every now and then the shriek ceases and is replaced by a wail—and the wail is a whale of a wail. It is a relief when the shriek starts again.

Mr. Hagen, who originally heard the alleged ghost and who has become more bored with the noise than any of the comparative beginners, yesterday resigned his position as watchman in the roundhouse. He declared that if everything was on the square he would work forever and willingly walk around and around and around all night, but that under present conditions no self-respecting roundhouse watchman could stand around watching.

Chief of Police Bellis will watch with seven railroad detectives. They will stay right at the roundhouse until the ghost appears. Beyond that they have made no arrangements.

Hoodoo Pursues Two Miners.

Two mining partners, Gus Erickson and Bert Pinney, of Hailey, Idaho, are certainly pursued by some hoodoo. While working on a stage ten feet below the surface, the stage broke away from its fastenings, dropping Pinney down the shaft twenty feet, where, after he had turned head down, his buckskin shoe laces caught on a nail and held him until help arrived. Three hundred feet of water would have received him had his laces broke.

The next afternoon Erickson came to town on his motor cycle to get the mail. Returning, the motor cycle skidded in a rut, throwing its rider over the handlebars into the road, the machine piling on top of him. With his skull fractured in three places, he lay in the road an hour before he was found. Both men will recover.

Former Water Boy's Story.

A prominent business man of Castleton, Ill., told the following story the other night to three or four citizens assembled in A. A. Webber's real-estate office:

"When I was a boy," he said, "I used to carry water for the men to drink when they were working in the field some distance from the house. One real warm day I carried water to my father, who was running a mower and cutting timothy for hay. As I was about to return home, I noticed a prairie chicken fly up from the freshly mown swath. Thinking there might be a nest of eggs—which, by the way, are fine eating—I investigated, and what do you think I found? A prairie chicken with its head cut off, the mowing bar being just the right height to perform the operation. I also found the feet and legs that belonged to the one that flew away. It probably stood up ready to fly as the mowing bar came along, while the other remained sitting and lost its head. Needless to say, we had prairie chicken for dinner."

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